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*The great temple of Bodh Gaya from the West, showing the sacred tree  
at the base of the temple.*



# BIHAR THE HEART OF INDIA



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BY

SIR JOHN HOULTON, C.S.I., C.I.E., I.C.S. (Retd.)

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## AUTHOR'S NOTE

Diacritical marks have not been used in the spelling of names or other words in this book, but in the index, as a help in cases where those unfamiliar with a word might find difficulty in pronouncing it, the long *a* or other vowel is indicated by a bar above it, thus,—*ā*.

## CORRIGENDA

<i>Page</i>	<i>Line</i>	
17	17	For <i>Shah</i> read <i>Shan</i>
68	13	For <i>Lady</i> read <i>Mrs.</i>
74	7	For <i>latter</i> read <i>last</i>
94	4	For Chapter <i>XXIII</i> read <i>XXII</i>
101	33	For <i>1860</i> read <i>1760</i>
112	11	After <i>gone</i> add <i>on</i>
116	7	For <i>Elijay</i> read <i>Elijah</i>
125	19	For <i>not</i> read <i>now</i>
128	23	For <i>3,407</i> read <i>3,036</i>
135	11	For <i>prisoners</i> read <i>persons</i>
141	18	For <i>1884</i> read <i>1845</i>
165	19	For <i>eastern</i> read <i>western</i>
174	29	For <i>18th</i> read <i>19th</i>
191	12	For <i>direct</i> read <i>divert</i>
199	28	For <i>XV</i> read <i>XIV</i>



## PREFACE

This book is intended to provide visitors to Bihar, and I hope others also, with a concise account of the history, antiquities, scenic beauties, and places of general interest in the Province. It aims at presenting in handy form a good deal of information which has hitherto been available only in historical works, gazetteers and other government publications, and in some learned periodicals. It makes no claim to originality or research, though I have used the results of observations made, whenever I had the opportunity during my service in the Province, during visits to most of its ancient sites and beauty spots, as well as to its industrial centres.

I have called this book ' Bihar, the Heart of India ', and those unfamiliar with the province will I think be satisfied after reading the book that the title is justified. In the days of the greatness of Magadha, of Mithila and the Lichchavis and Vaisali, of Gautama Buddha and Mahavira, of the Mauryan Emperors, it was indeed the central point of the culture and activities of most of the Indian peninsula. In our own day it has again attained a position of central importance to the Dominion of India, this time through its vast mineral resources and its industrial centres;—the Jharia, Giridih, Bokaro and Karanpura coalfields and the industries which have grown up around them; the copper, iron and manganese mines; the rich mica deposits and industry; the works of the Tata Iron and Steel Company and the satellite companies in the great industrial city of Jamshedpur. There is much to attract and hold the visitor who comes to the province. There are the remains of once splendid cities and monasteries; temples, shrines and places hallowed by association with the great religious leaders and the figures of mythology; places of great scenic beauty like the forests in the far north of Champaran district, on the foothills of the Himalayas, and a hundred places on the plateau and escarpments of Chota Nagpur. For the sportsman there are vast forests where tigers and



other big game can be hunted, and in the cold weather there are great numbers of wild-fowl in suitable places, snipe all over the country in the wet paddy-fields, and partridge and jungle-fowl in the jungle and bush. There is inexhaustible material for the anthropologist among the many interesting peoples, tribesmen and others, who inhabit the province. In the cold season the weather throughout the province is delightful, and almost throughout the year the Chota Nagpur plateau is a pleasant refuge from the damp heat of the plains.

With all these advantages I believe that there is a great future for tourist traffic in the province—including visitors from all over India and the Far East, and from Europe and America. At present facilities for the tourist, in the shape of hotels and rest houses and in some places roads, are inadequate, and I venture to hope that the government of Bihar will in due course be able to increase such amenities. I hope also that the idea of National Parks will catch on, as it has in so many countries, and that places like the Rajgir hills, the Rohtas plateau and Netarhat will be made into National Parks and Sanctuaries for wild life, with facilities for visitors, whether rich or poor.

I take this opportunity of acknowledging the encouragement and help which I have received from the publishers, and from the Royal Asiatic Society of Bengal, as well as from many friends in Bihar. Among others whose advice has been most helpful are Sir C. P. N. Singh, C.I.E., Vice-Chancellor of Patna University, Dr. K. K. Datta, Professor of History at that University, and Mr. S. A. Shere, Curator of the Patna museum. I am much indebted to Mrs. M. C. Bird of Ranchi for her kind assistance in preparing the book for the press, and for many helpful suggestions.

## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTORY

'THE endless diversity of the Indian sub-continent,' wrote Vincent A. Smith, 'is apparent, and has been the subject of many trite remarks.' Without risking any general remark to which the learned historian's adjective might be applied, we may simply say that the observation applies equally to the province of Bihar. For its history and traditions go back to the earliest dawn; the relics of its glorious past can still be seen in its ancient cities or on once almost forgotten sites; it was the scene of the life's work of the most venerated names in two of the world's great religions—Gautama Buddha and Vardhamana Mahavira—and one of the world's great rulers, the Emperor Asoka. Its shrines and relics of the past include the great temple of Bodh Gaya, the ancient monastery and university of Nalanda, the cyclopean walls of Old Rajgir—of unknown antiquity—and the remains of Pataliputra, Vaisali and other famous cities of the ancient world. Among the many sites and buildings venerated by Muslims are the splendid tombs of Sheikh Yahia Maneri and Makhdum Shah Daulat at Maner, and Mallik Ibrahim Bayu and Makhdum Shah Sharif-ud-din at Bihar; while in Sasaram there is one of the grandest specimens of Pathan architecture in India, the mausoleum of Sher Shah. One of the sacred places of the Sikhs is the birthplace of Guru Govind Singh in Patna. The fine Roman Catholic Church of the Blessed Virgin Mary, in Patna City, is one of the oldest Christian churches in India.

The scenery and climate of the province range from the foothills of the Himalayas, over the vast and fertile plains of Bihar proper, to the hills and forests and the wide plateau of Chota Nagpur. Its natural wealth is equally varied, for the alluvial soil of North and South Bihar pro-



duces rich harvests of rice, wheat, maize, sugarcane, tobacco, chillies and many other crops; while Chota Nagpur has its forests, its great coal-fields—the chief coal resources of the country—the world's most valuable deposits of mica, and iron-ore and other minerals in great quantities. Its 36 million inhabitants include the Aryan population of Bihar proper and the sturdy aboriginals of Chota Nagpur and the Santal Parganas. Its northern boundary approaches the Himalayas, and 400 miles to the south it reaches the latitude of the Sundarbans.

The province falls naturally into 3 main divisions, North Bihar, South Bihar and Chota Nagpur, and for the purposes of this book it will be convenient to deal with them in separate parts. North Bihar is separated from the rest of the province by the river Ganges, and in the very distant past, as we shall see, its history followed a different course from that of South Bihar. The Tirhut Division, excluding the district of Saran, corresponds roughly to the ancient kingdom of Mithila, while the South Bihar districts of Patna and Gaya formed the old country of Magadha. North Bihar itself is divided into three parts by the rivers Gandak and Kosi. South Bihar is, broadly speaking, the plain south of the Ganges, but it merges into the highlands of Chota Nagpur, and one of its districts, Monghyr, is still cut in two by the Ganges. The northern part of Bhagalpur is now a separate sub-district. Chota Nagpur itself is the ancient Jharkhand, or forest country, and consists mainly of a plateau, about 2,000 feet above the sea; but one of its districts, Manbhum, merges into the plains of Bengal, while Singhbhum to the south is also below the main escarpment of the plateau.

The configuration of the province is one of the reasons for the isolation of the different zones in the past, for the natural lines of communication cross Bihar from east to west. Four of the main railway lines of India pass through the province from east to west—the Oudh and Tirhut Railway, north of the Ganges, the East Indian Railway main line and Grand Chord line in South Bihar, and the Bengal Nagpur Railway south of the Chota Nagpur plateau. The lines from Gomoh to Ranchi Road, from Muri to Palamau



and Son East Bank, and the narrow gauge line to Ranchi and Lohardaga also run mainly from east to west. The Grand Trunk Road passes through the province on a line almost parallel to the Grand Chord line. The Ganges itself (until comparatively recent times the main artery of communication between Bengal and Northern India) flows across the province from west to east. The only main routes from north to south in the province are the railway from Patna to Gaya and the road on to Ranchi *via* Chaparan, and the road from Patna to Ranchi and on to the south of the province. Plans for new arterial roads and railways are in existence, and when these materialise, the isolation of the different parts of the province will be largely eliminated.

The actual formation of the province of Bihar as we know it is of recent date. Before 1911 Bihar and Orissa formed part of Bengal; but in that year they were cut off to form the province of Bihar and Orissa, and in 1936 the province of Orissa was created, leaving Bihar with its present boundaries.

With this general description of the main features of the province we will now turn to a more detailed description of its three main divisions.

## CHAPTER II

### EARLY HISTORY OF MAGADHA

#### *Gautama Buddha and Mahavira— Buddhism and Jainism*

WE may begin our account of the three parts of the Province of Bihar with the two districts which in ancient times formed the Kingdom of Magadha, Patna and Gaya; it will be convenient to deal separately with the other districts of South Bihar which lie to the west and east of this central core. To all who are interested in the great events and personalities and cities of the remote past this country of Magadha must make a special appeal. Its history as we know it begins at least 2,500 years ago, but long before that it was famous throughout northern India. More is known of its early history than of any other part of India; it has indeed been said that the early history of Magadha is, in great part, the history of India.

The northern boundary of this ancient country is the Ganges, and its western boundary is the Son. On the south rise the foothills of the Chota Nagpur plateau. Its eastern borders are less well defined, but they follow approximately the Kiul river and the hills to the west of Jamui. The country to the west of the Son, the modern Shahabad, was included in the Mauryan realm at an early stage of that epoch, and the old kingdom of Anga to the east—parts of modern Monghyr and Bhagalpur—was attached to Magadha by the conquests of Bimbisara.

The most ancient of the many old cities and hallowed sites of Magadha is Rajgir. In the picturesque hill-ranges near Giriak, 50 miles south-east of Patna, the visitor may still see the massive walls of the old city and fortress of Girivraja. They stand on the escarpments of the hills, 'half as old as time.' For their story we must turn to



legend, and the ancient epics of India. There is a reference to the founding of the city in the *Ramayana*. In the *Mahabharat* we read of the powerful King Jarasandha, whose ancestors had ruled in Rajgir, and who, according to popular belief, built the great outer walls of the city. The walls have a perimeter of at least 25 miles. They are on the average 17 feet thick, and on the sides of the Banganga pass on the southern side of the hills, where they are best preserved, they are about 12 feet in height. One can still see the bastions placed at intervals on the outside of the walls, and the ramps which gave access to the top. At the beginning of the sixth century B.C. the Haryanka dynasty arose, and a king of that line, Bimbisara, founded the city of Rajagriha, or New Rajgir, just outside the hills to the north.

We will return to Rajgir later, but soon after the time of King Bimbisara the scene shifts to Patna on the Ganges, and we will trace from there the course of history in South Bihar and describe briefly some of the relics of the past.

Ajatasatru, son of Bimbisara, built a fortress on the Son, near the junction of that river with the Ganges, and called it Patali. At that time the Son joined the Ganges well below Patna, and not, as at present, some twelve miles above it. There is a very strong tradition, rejected by Vincent Smith, that Ajatasatru gained the throne by the murder of his father. His mother was a Lichchavi lady of Vaisali in North Bihar, but he came into conflict with the Lichchavi republic, and defeated it, or secured its subjection. From that time until the decline of the Mauryan power, Mithila, the country of the Lichchavis, formed part of the dominions of the kings of Magadha. Ajatasatru's wife was a princess of Kosala, the kingdom to the west of the Gandak river, and it is fairly certain that Kosala, or part of it, was also absorbed into the dominions of Ajatasatru. We shall see more of the Lichchavis in dealing with North Bihar. Thus, three hundred years before the time of Asoka, the rulers of Magadha had consolidated a kingdom which included the greater part of North and South Bihar.

The two great teachers, Gautama Buddha and Maha-



vira, virtually the founders of Buddhism and Jainism, were contemporaries, and lived in the fifth and sixth centuries B.C., in the reigns of Bimbisara and his son.

Siddharta Gautama, son of the Sakya king of Kapilavastu, a city east of the Gandak, was born at Rummindei, inside the borders of Nepal, more than 2,500 years ago. Two hundred and fifty years after his death the pious emperor Asoka erected a pillar at the spot with an inscription to commemorate the birth. There is no more familiar story than that of the youth of the prince, and of his departure from his loved ones—the great renunciation. In his search for truth and enlightenment he came to the Rajgir hills, and then left there with other ascetics to embark on a life of fasting and asceticism. This period lasted for six years, after which he realised that the way to Truth did not lie through the mortification of the flesh. His companions left him, and he determined to devote himself to silent and lonely meditation. It was near the sacred Bodhi tree, by the side of which the great temple of Bodhi Gaya now stands, that he at last attained enlightenment. Soon after that he began his life-long mission. He went to Benares, and from there sent out a band of disciples to preach according to his views. For forty-five years Buddha carried on his preaching, and at the age of eighty he moved to Kusinara to die.

Such was the veneration that Buddha inspired that very soon after his death he was regarded by his followers as being greater than mortal man. He had taught the need for purity in deed, word and thought. He laid special emphasis on truthfulness, reverence for one's superiors, and avoidance of taking animal life. He taught self-discipline, but rejected the path of extreme self-denial, which he himself had tried and found unavailing. He preached the Middle Way—the life mid-way between sensuality and extreme asceticism. The highest aim is deliverance from rebirth—from the suffering inseparable from life; and that can be attained only, according to the doctrine of *karma*, by leading a pure and pious life.

The teaching of Buddha not only led to the spread of

a new religion, but profoundly affected the Hindu religion itself. It led to the disappearance of most of the ritual of sacrifices, and to other changes. In spreading over a great part of the eastern world Buddhism has itself undergone changes, and has passed through times of eclipse. It has almost disappeared from the country of its birth, but it is still the faith of greater numbers of men than any other of the religions of the world.

Vardhamana Mahavira was, like Gautama Buddha, a member of a noble family. He was born in Vaisali, his father being a Lichchavi of high rank. He joined the ascetic order of Parsvanath, but after some years became dissatisfied with what he regarded as the laxity of its rules, and started on a career of teaching and reform. Mahavira did not accept the concept of a supreme deity. To the Jains God is 'the highest, the noblest, the fullest manifestation of all the powers that lie latent in the soul of man.' Mahavira exhorted his followers to take the narrow path of extreme asceticism. He went much farther than Buddha in his injunctions against taking life. All forms of life, even the humblest, are sacred. To the Jains every living and every inanimate thing has a soul.

Mahavira lived a long life of wandering and preaching, gathering around him a band of ascetic followers called *Nigranthas*, men who discarded all social ties—and who later became known as Jains, after their leader's title of *Jaina* or spiritual conqueror. Mahavira died at Pawapuri, not far from Giriak and Rajgir. A schism arose among the Jains after the Master's death, but the open breach did not occur until several centuries later. There are now two main sects of Jains, the Digambara or 'sky-clad' (naked) and the Svetambara or 'white-robed.' Jainism never attained anything like the following that Buddhism did, and it never spread beyond the borders of India. Vincent Smith believes that the legend of the conversion of Chandragupta Maurya to Jainism is true, and that the merciful tenets of that religion caused a change in his policy and a lightening of the severity of his rule.

Both Buddhism and Jainism had their roots in the ancient Hindu religion, but though they did not attack the



belief in the Hindu gods, they did not accept the authority of the Vedas. Both religions adopted the fundamental tenets of Hinduism, such as the belief in *karma*—that conduct in this life determines a person's state in his next incarnation. It is strange that Buddhism, with its ideals which, though high, are not impossible of attainment by mortal men, has almost disappeared from the land of its birth; while the ascetic and narrow religion of Jainism has survived there. Yet Buddhism was eagerly adopted by millions over a great part of the world, while Jainism is still confined to India. The explanation may be partly in the fact that Buddhism broke away at the very outset from the caste system, a very powerful force in India, and never returned to it; while Jainism accommodated itself to that system.



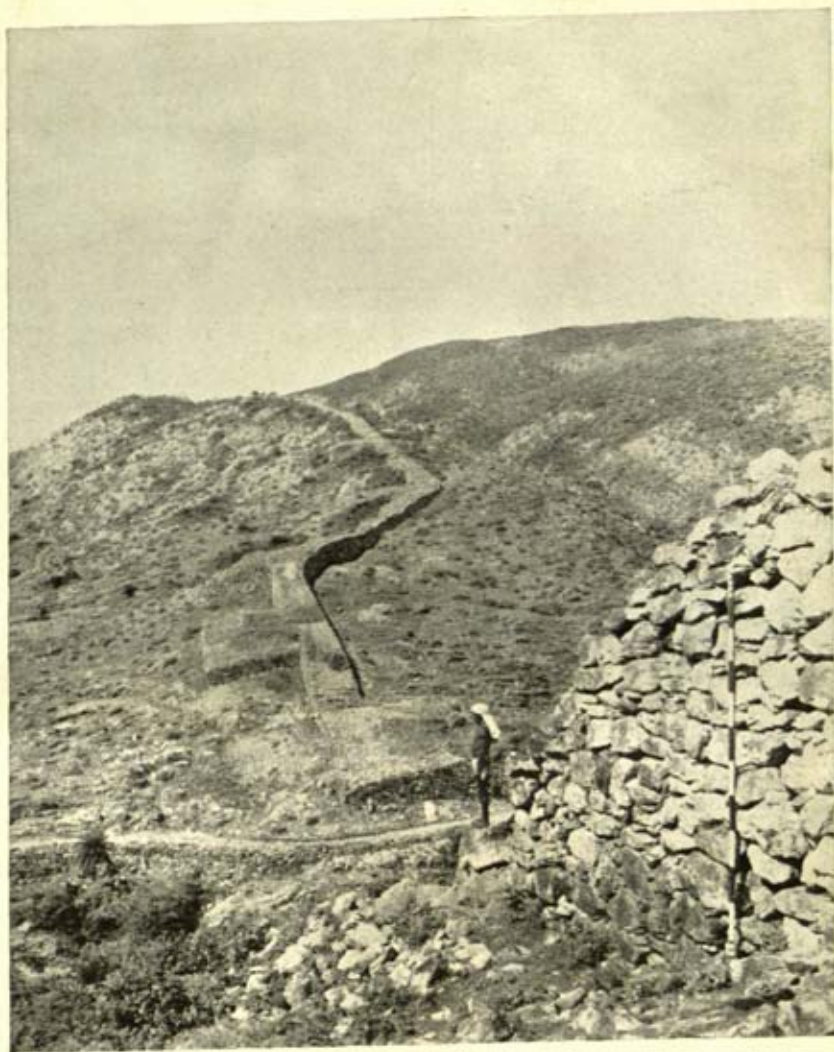


Photo : Archaeological Survey of India

*The prehistoric walls of Old Rajgir, near the Banganga Pass*



*Photo: Archaeological Survey of India*

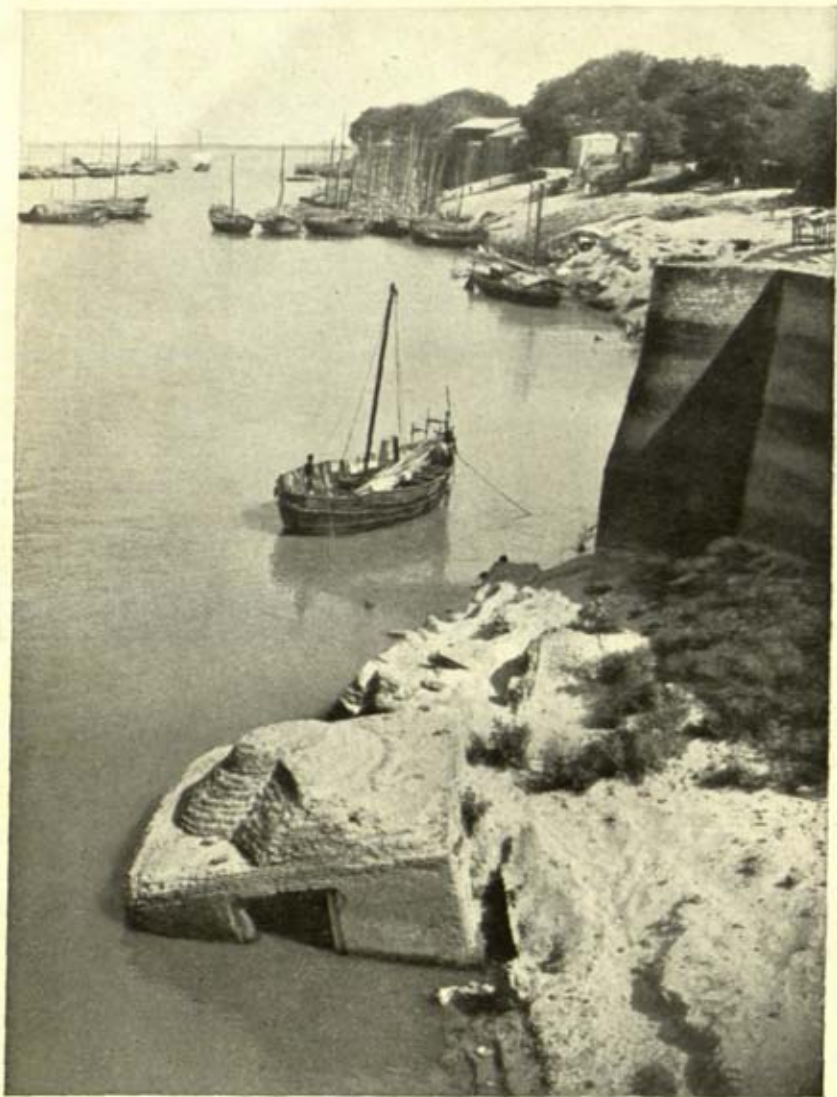
*The wooden ramparts of Pataliputra, excavated in 1923*



Photo: Archaeological Survey of India

*Excavations at the site of the great hall of the Mauryan emperors*





*The old fort at Patna on the Ganges*

### CHAPTER III

## THE GREAT DAYS OF MAGADHA

*Foundation of Pataliputra—Chandragupta Maurya—Asoka the Great—Mauryan Administration—the Sunga kings—the Guptas—the Chinese travellers—the Palas—Decline of Magadha*

THE son or grandson of Ajatasatru built the city of Kusumapara or Pataliputra on the Ganges, at the place where Ajatasatru had built the fort. Gautama Buddha passed this way not long before his death, while the city was being built, and he prophesied that it would become great and wealthy, but would be threatened by three dangers—fire, flood and internal dissension.

We know little of the remaining Haryanka and Saisnuga kings, or of the dynasty of the Nandas which followed them, but it is fairly certain that the Nandas annexed to Magadha extensive territories to the east and south, and that when, in 326 B.C., Alexander the Great invaded India, the wealth and power of the reigning Nanda king were famed in Northern India. With the advent of the Mauryan emperors history reaches firm ground. Chandragupta was the first of the great line of the Mauryas (the name Maurya is the clan name of the family; their home was the country on the borders of Nepal and the United Provinces near which Gautama Buddha was born). Chandragupta is believed to have ascended the throne about the year 321 B.C., after deposing and killing the last of the Nanda kings. Chandragupta's able minister and confidant, Chanakya (also known as Kautilya and Vishnugupta), was almost as famous as the master whom he served. The authorship of the *Arthashastra*, a manual on state-craft, the manuscript of which was discovered in 1905 in southern India, is generally ascribed to Chanakya,



although several scholars have held that it was written at a later period, and some deny that the minister ever existed. But some at least of the observations in the manual are confirmed by those of Megasthenes and others; and whoever wrote it, it probably refers to the early Mauryan times. Other sources of information about this epoch are the accounts of Greek visitors and the carved edicts of Asoka.

Chandragupta when a young man had met Alexander. After the great emperor's death, Chandragupta, who had apparently adopted the career of a soldier of fortune, in which his great abilities brought him to the front, attacked the Macedonian garrisons left in the Indus basin, with the help of rulers and troops of Northern India, and destroyed them. After Chandragupta had ascended the throne he was himself attacked by the Syrian king Seleucos Nicator, who hoped to regain Alexander's lost provinces of India. The result was a victory for Chandragupta, for Seleucos had to cede to him the whole of north-western India. A peace was signed, and there is some reason to believe that Chandragupta married the daughter of Seleucos. The Syrian King sent an envoy to the court of Chandragupta—Megasthenes; to the surviving fragments of whose writings we are indebted for much fascinating information about the great city and the administration.<sup>1</sup>

Little is known about Bindusara, the successor of Chandragupta, except that he extended still farther the bounds of the empire. He was succeeded about the year 273 B.C. by his son, the celebrated Asoka, although the actual coronation seems to have taken place a few years later.

Asoka reigned for about thirty-five years, and in that long period he waged only one war of conquest—against the country of Kalinga on the Bay of Bengal. In this campaign, according to a rock-edict of Asoka himself, 100,000 people were killed and 150,000 were taken into captivity. The emperor was overcome with remorse for the suffering and horrors which are the inevitable accompaniment of

<sup>1</sup> Ulrich Wilcken, in his *Alexander the Great* (Berlin 1931) goes so far as to say that this work of Megasthenes is the best book on India yet written.



war, and decided to abjure war and violence as a means of retaining or increasing power. He undertook a pilgrimage to the famous sites associated with Gautama Buddha; he sent Buddhist missions to many parts of the known world; he gave up hunting and the eating of meat; and even, for a time, assumed the garb of a monk. The empire of Asoka, with tributary countries, covered the whole of the Indian peninsula (except Assam and the extreme south below Nellore), Kashmir, Afghanistan, Baluchistan and the valley of Nepal.

At various sites visited by Asoka in his vast empire he had inscriptions cut in the solid rock or on pillars. The latter bear the typical brilliant polish of the Mauryas, the carving of the letters is precise and fine, and some of the capitals are masterpieces of sculpture. The traveller can still see, at, for instance, Lauriya Nandangarh in North Bihar, the polished shaft with its lion capital erect on its base, the carving as clear, after the sun and storms of over 2,000 years, as if the work had been finished yesterday.

The Asokan inscriptions are usually in the nature of sermons on the emperor's conception of *dharma*—the law of piety or duty. The following is a translation of a typical rock edict from northern Mysore:

Obey thy father and thy mother; speak the truth; respect the life of all creatures—this is the law of *dharma*. The pupil must reverence his teacher, and all men must show proper respect to their relations. For this is the ancient law of conduct, by which length of days may be attained, and by which men must regulate their lives.

Other edicts enjoin kind treatment of slaves and servants.

The city of Pataliputra was surrounded by strong fortifications of earth and wood, with great numbers of towers and gates. A carriage-way ran along the top of the ramparts. The palaces and public buildings were magnificent, and the Chinese traveller Fa Hien, who saw them 600 years after Asoka's time, was so impressed by the massive buildings and the intricate sculpture that he could not believe that human hands had built them. There were

beautifully kept gardens and an extensive royal hunting ground which, we may assume, became a sanctuary for wild creatures after the conversion of the emperor to Buddhism. There were gladiatorial combats and chariot-races, including races with an ox in the middle and a horse on each side. The class of courtesans occupied a high position, as in ancient Greece. The emperor himself had an Amazonian bodyguard, many of the women being probably foreigners.

The municipal organization would be the envy of many a modern city. The thirty members formed six Boards, and the various administrative duties were clearly divided among them. The main responsibilities of the Boards were as follows:

Industry and artisans.

Care of foreigners.

Registration of births and deaths.

Trade and commerce, including supervision of weights and measures and licensing of traders.

Supervision of manufactures.

Collection of the tax on sales, at one tenth of the purchase-money.

It is interesting to note that in old Pataliputra public houses or restaurants were regulated by the state, and that emphasis was laid on making these houses attractive to the customer. Drunkenness was frowned on, but moderate drinking was not discouraged.

The emperor himself worked hard and systematically, and made a point of being always accessible for business of state. Suppliants had a right to see him in person, this being indeed a persistent tradition of government and justice in India. He was assisted in his enormous task of governing a sub-continent by a Council of Ministers. The military organization, like the civil, was under a number of Boards, one of which controlled the Navy. It is probable that in those days the Ganges and the Son were deeper and more easily navigable rivers than they are now, with less of the vast expanses of sand and less fluctuations in depth and course of the main current, so that quays and jetties could be maintained in the port of the city. The



roads were marked with milestones, and there were rest-houses for travellers at intervals. Great importance was attached to irrigation, and there were apparently canal systems as well as irrigation reservoirs.

The rule of the Mauryas was harsh, but not more so than that of many other nations of much more recent times. The penal code was severe, and torture was a legal institution. They had, apparently, an elaborate organization of spies, who picked up 'information' from various sources, including the restaurants and the educated professional ladies. No doubt there was an intelligence system with ramifications all over the empire. Severe judgments have been passed on the Mauryan rule and its methods (or supposed methods), but you cannot have it both ways. Law and order could not be maintained, or the peace preserved, in such a vast empire, consisting of many peoples and many formerly independent kingdoms, by kid-glove methods.

Asoka died about the year 232 B.C. and 48 years later the last of the Mauryas was killed by the first of the Sunga kings. Under the rule of the Sungas the arts flourished for a brief space; these were the great days of Vidisa (in Eastern Malwa), and Bharhut (in Central India) where the famous stone railing and gateway survive to show the excellence of the art of stone-carving in that period.

Of the course of events in Bihar for the next five hundred years little is definitely known. Pataliputra must have remained a great city. There is reason to believe that the Lichchavis of North Bihar had obtained possession of the city and made it their capital. The first of the great line of the Gupta kings came to the throne in A.D. 320. Chandragupta I, king of Magadha or a part of it, married a princess of the Lichchavi clan, and laid the foundations of an empire which, in the time of his successor, Samudragupta, and of Chandragupta II, covered almost the whole of the northern half of the Indian peninsula. (A reference is given in Chapter to the very interesting coins of Chandragupta I and his Queen.) The period is regarded by many as the golden age of India. The country enjoyed a long period of peace; and literature, art and science flourished.



Both Buddhists and Hindus enjoyed complete freedom of worship under the Guptas, but Buddhism had already entered on its decline, and a Brahmanical revival was in progress. It was during the reign of Chandragupta II, about A.D. 400, that the Chinese traveller and pilgrim Fa Hien came to India to obtain copies of ancient Buddhist works. He lived for three years in Pataliputra. He was so absorbed in his religious researches that he has left little on record about what he saw, but the little that he did write about the cities and the state of the country is of the greatest interest.

The last of the great rulers of the Gupta line was Skandagupta, who died in the year 455, and by the end of the seventh century the line was extinct. From that time Buddhism began unmistakably to lose ground in its ancient stronghold, Bihar, and the great days of Magadha were over. When the traveller Hieuen Tsiang, the 'Master of the Law'—with Fa Hien the most famous of the Chinese pilgrims who came to India—visited Pataliputra in A.D. 640, he found it a deserted city, and only the foundations and a few walls of the splendid buldings were left. It is possible that it had been sacked during the Hun invasions or the inroads of the fanatical anti-Buddhist king Sasanka of Central Bengal. The whole of Bihar and Bengal were, in Hieuen Tsiang's time, under the sway of Harsha, king of Kanauj, a devout Buddhist in his later years, under whom monasteries and seats of learning flourished, and who welcomed with great honour the Master of the Law. With the death of Harsha, his hard-won empire disintegrated, and the light which had for a short time illumined the pages of Indian history faded once more.

The Pala dynasty arose in the middle of the eighth century. The second king of the line, Dharmapala, was a staunch patron of Buddhism. He and his successor Devapala built up another great empire, and restored some of the greatness of Pataliputra. But the old city did not remain the capital for long. A 'camp of victory' was set up at Monghyr, and in the latter days of the dynasty the capital was at Uddandapura, the modern Bihar, where a great monastery was founded. Of another great monas-

tery, that of Vikramasila, which Dharmapala is believed to have founded, all trace has now been lost. The bounds of the kingdom steadily contracted under the onslaughts of vigorous opponents from the east and the west. In the twelfth century the Sena kings of Bengal were moving into and across Magadha, while the Gahadavalas marched into Gaya. These last invaders were driven out by Lakshman Sena, but when the end came, with the first Muslim incursions into Magadha, the territories of the Pala kings were confined to the city of Bihar and a small tract round it.



## CHAPTER IV

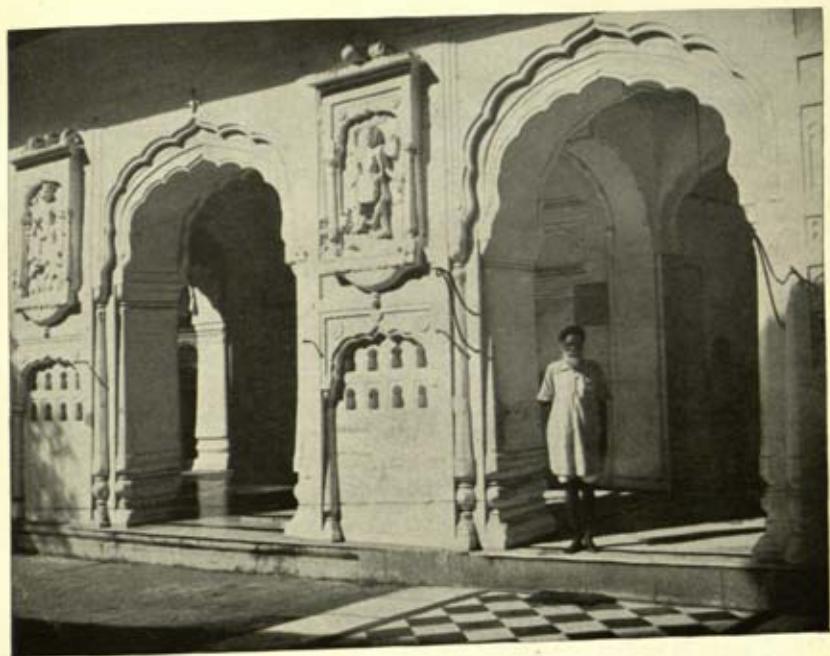
### THE MUHAMMADAN INVASION AND LATER HISTORY

*The New City of Patna—English Merchants—Grant of the  
Dewani—the Opium Trade*

IN or near the year 1197 the first Muhammadan invasion of Bihar took place. The town of Bihar was captured by Ikhtiyar-ud-din Muhammad ibn Bakhtiyar (Bakhtiyar Khilji) at the head of a small force of cavalry, as the result of a swift and sudden raid. This gave the final blow to the Buddhist religion as a force in this part of India. The great monastery at Bihar town was sacked and the monks slaughtered, except for a few who escaped to Nepal, Tibet and South India. The Muhammadan chronicler of these events records that after the massacre a search was made for someone capable of reading the books in the great library, but none was found alive. For over three hundred years after this event the overlordship of Bihar shifted, with the changes of fortune in the continual wars between rival Muhammadan powers, from Delhi to Jaunpur and Gaur and other cities. In 1495 Sikandar Lodi, Sultan of Delhi, annexed Bihar province and appointed his son to be its governor. In 1529 Babur defeated the rebel Afghan chiefs of Bengal and Bihar near the junction of the Gogra and the Ganges, above Patna. It was in South Bihar that Sher Shah rose to eminence,—by his defeat of the Lohanis he became the virtual master of Bihar. He defeated the emperor Humayun at Chausa in 1539 and again the following year. These struggles ended with Sher Shah's conquest of Northern India and his attaining the imperial throne.

Sher Shah built the new city of Patna, guarded by a fortress, on the forgotten site of Asoka's capital. In 1574





*The birthplace of Guru Govind Singh, Patna City*



*Building a large boat on the Ganges near Patna*



the city was taken by the emperor Akbar himself, during the rebellion of Daud Khan, son of Sulaiman Kararani, governor of South Bihar and Bengal. Daud Khan had held out in the fortified city of Patna for months, against Akbar's general, Munim Khan; but the arrival of Akbar before the city, and the news of the capture of Hajipur, led Daud to take refuge in flight. His army fled in all directions, hunted down by the Moghuls, and many were drowned near Fatwa, when the Punpun bridge gave way under the press of men, horses and elephants. Akbar appointed Munim Khan as governor of Bihar, and from that time Patna again became the capital. In 1612 it was sacked by the pretender Khusru, who had himself proclaimed emperor in the governor's palace. Shah Jahan held the city for a time during his rebellion against his father. Patna entered on a period of prosperity and splendour with the appointment of Aurangzeb's grandson, Azim-uz-Shah, as the governor in 1697. For a time the city was called Azimabad after him, and many of the Delhi nobles came to live there. In Azim's time alms-houses and rest-houses were built for the poor and destitute. After his death in 1712—he met a miserable end in a quicksand—his son Farrukhsiyar was enthroned as emperor in Patna city. The last of the separate governors of Bihar was Fakhr-ud-daula, whom the emperor dismissed, and from that time Bihar came under the control of the governors of Bengal.

The first English merchants came to Patna from Agra in 1620, and by 1657 a factory for saltpetre had been established. The Dutch were established already, both in Patna and in Chapra in North Bihar. The famous Job Charnock, founder of Calcutta, was head of the English factory for 16 years, leaving in 1680.

In the middle of the 18th century, in the time of Alivardi Khan, the city passed through troubled times, several battles being fought in its vicinity. After Clive's victory at Plassey, Patna was for several years the centre of operations of the British troops under Clive, and, later, Randfurlie Knox. In 1763 Nawab Mir Kasim took Patna, and under his orders the notorious adventurer Walter Reinhardt, also known as Somru, massacred all the British



and other prisoners who had fallen into his power. Even the sick and wounded were not spared. Retribution came with the decisive battle of Buxar, when Sir Hector Munro defeated the Nawab with heavy loss. The emperor Shah Alam, with the Nawab Vizier of Oudh, Shuja-ud-Daula, had supported Mir Kasim.

After the battle of Buxar, Shah Alam submitted, and the next year the victorious armies captured the fortresses of Chunar and Allahabad. From that time Bihar, with the rest of Bengal, came under the suzerainty of the East India Company. The edict by which Shah Alam granted the *Dewani*, or control, of Bengal, Bihar and Orissa in 1765 to the Company enjoined on the emperor's 'royal descendants, the viziers, the bestowers of dignity, the Omrahs high in rank, the great officers, to leave the said office (the *Dewani*) in possession of the said Company, from generation to generation, for ever and ever.' The company agreed to pay an annual sum of 26 lakhs of rupees to the emperor in return for the grant. The administration was for a time a dual one, a Nawab with a *Dewan* or governing minister continuing in office under the company, but in 1772 the company itself "stood forth as *Dewan*", the *Dewan* Shitab Rai being removed, though his son was given an important office in the administration. Several changes in the method of revenue administration took place before the office of Revenue Chief was abolished in 1787, and Thomas Law became the first Collector. Law made a decennial settlement with the landlords, a settlement which in 1793 became permanent.

One of the principal objects of trade among the English merchants continued for a long time to be saltpetre, and there were factories of this commodity at Chapra, Singhia (near Hajipur), Fatwa and Matt (south west of Gaya). Another important industry was that of opium. The East India Company obtained a monopoly of this trade in 1761. At first the opium was purchased through contractors, but in 1797 an officer of the company styled the opium agent was appointed, and from that time supplies were arranged for by that officer. There were several opium factories in various parts of the province. The Patna factory was

situated in the original factory of the English traders, a massive building now occupied by the government press. Dr. Hooker gives an interesting account of the manufacture of opium, which he saw going on in the Patna factory in 1848. At that time, and for many years afterwards, almost the whole of the output was destined for the Chinese market, and it was a very lucrative branch of the country's export trade. (In 1881 the Indian opium revenue was £10,480,000). In 1901 the British Government offered to reduce the supplies of opium to China by 1/10th each year until 1910, an offer which was gratefully accepted by the Chinese Government. The Shanghai Conference of 1907 also resolved to stop the export of opium to countries prohibiting its consumption. By 1910 the Patna opium factory was an anachronism and it was closed.



## CHAPTER V

### PATALIPUTRA AND THE MODERN CITY OF PATNA

#### *Cottage Industries—Dinapur—Maner*

THE visitor to Patna, after reading the brief account in Chapter III, of the ancient history and glories of Pataliputra, may well say: "Well, where are the ruins? Show us the relics of this famous capital". I must regretfully answer that there is not much to see. Great stone palaces and halls like those which adorned the old capital cannot disappear altogether. Their foundations and numerous columns and sculptures and fragments must be somewhere. But two factors are against the archaeologist. The first is that most of the remains lie beneath the modern city, and the other is that they are buried so deeply in the soft soil and silt that any excavation soon reaches the sub-soil water-level and in any case fills up at once in the rains. Excavations were carried out under the supervision of Dr. Spooner about thirty years ago, through the generosity of Sir Ratan Tata. At Kumrahar, South of the city, Spooner reached at a depth of 17 feet the remains of a great pillared hall. Its discovery is one of the romances and tragedies of archaeology. For the places where the regular rows of great pillars had stood were clearly revealed, but the pillars themselves had disappeared, sunk with their own weight into the alluvium, so deep that no boring can trace them. Only one of the pillars—one which had fallen onto its side—remains. The visitor can see it (now stuck on ugly supports) just to the South of the road which runs through Kumrahar from the level crossing East of Patna Junction to Patna city. It is a massive pillar of hard sandstone, polished in the unique way of the Mauryan craftsmen. One can still see the signs of the masons who carved it 2,500 years ago, and speculate as to the meaning of the



strange arrow marks and the projections on the sides. The deep pit made by the excavators is full of water, and on a part of the site stands a ruined Muhammadan tomb. Other excavations, at Maharaj Khanda and Bulandibagh, revealed a part of the wooden palisade and a gateway of the old city, and a beautiful chariot wheel (now in the Patna museum).

On the road through Kumrahar, near the second level crossing after Patna Junction, is the ancient well called the Agam Kuan, about which there are many legends. It is believed to have been the "Hell" of Asoka, in which there were furnaces and torture chambers. There is a legend of a monk who was thrown into the furnace but remained unscathed. It is a place of veneration and pilgrimage, though it is regarded with horror. Pilgrims still throw coins into the well, as they have done for the last thousand years.

For the few sculptures of the Mauryan age which have been discovered in or near Patna a visit should be paid to the Patna museum. One of its greatest treasures is the life-size statue, in the hard polished sandstone of the Mauryas, of a female bearer of a *Chauri* (fly-whisk). It was revealed in 1917 by the collapse of a part of the bank of the river at Didarganj, East of Patna city. Some of interesting terra cotta figurines discovered during excavations in the city are also ascribed to this period or somewhat later. The best-known is the bust of a laughing boy, but there are many others showing the curious and various headdresses worn by the women in those days.

Few indeed are the remains of the splendid buildings of Asoka's capital. The "cloud-capp'd towers, the gorgeous palaces, the solemn temples" have indeed dissolved, and left "not a rack behind".

The city as we now see it stands on a long and narrow strip of raised land, and the street which runs for nine miles through the centre of it has probably been on the same alignment from the earliest times. It is unfortunately practically the only road out of Patna, though the motorist can avoid the greater part of the crowded bazaar by taking the road South of the city along the side of the flood

embankment. To give some idea of the important sites and buildings we may start from a point to the West of the Patna *maidan* and go through the city by the main street.

The most conspicuous object at the western end of Patna is the huge granary, locally known as the Golghar, which was built in 1786 as an insurance against famine. The idea was that the grain would be carried up the spiral staircase on the outside and poured in through a hole in the top. If local tradition is to be believed the results were not very successful, because by an oversight the doors at the bottom had been made to open inwards. One story, which is perhaps apocryphal, is to the effect that when at last they succeeded in breaking in the door with axes, to get the grain out, the rush of grain killed several people. Anyhow there was nothing wrong with the construction, for it has withstood two great earthquakes without appreciable damage. Patna people still relate how Jang Bahadur, the great founder and hero of modern Nepal, rode his horse up the steep spiral staircase and down again.

The fine old residences of the Commissioner and other officials in this neighbourhood have nearly all been rebuilt since the earthquake or have fallen into disrepair. The Civil Surgeon's house near the river bank is one of the old buildings which has survived. Passing the administrative offices on our left and the fine open space, the *maidan*, formerly used for a racecourse, the Bankipore Club buildings are on the river bank near the Anglican Church. Near by is the compound of the district judge, the site of the first piece of land acquired in Patna by the East India Company. The building now used for the Munsiff's courts was originally intended for the Commander in Chief, before he moved to Monghyr. The old burying ground of the Company is in a corner of the convent compound near here. On the river bank is the tomb of Major Randfurlie Knox, who died in 1764, and to whom the author of the Patna Gazetteer refers in terms of high praise. Knox and his friend Shitab Rai were the heroes of an important action at Birpur near Hajipur against the troops of the Emperor Ali Gauhar and of Jean Law, in



the year 1760. Knox, with a small force of British and Indian soldiers, and with the invaluable help of Shitab Rai and his 300 men, defeated a force of 6,000 cavalry and a still larger force of infantry with 30 guns, after a most gallant action during which they withstood and beat off many cavalry charges and stood firm under hours of heavy fire. The forces of the Emperor and Jean Law were in the end forced to retire, and Knox gave them no respite but followed on their heels until nightfall. Knox was a man of the highest character, and was respected and loved by Europeans and Indians alike. After the Birpur battle Shitab Rai was also held in very high esteem. The following year saw the defeat of the Emperor and the capture of Law by Carnac on the Mahane river near Bihar town.

Passing the Mahendra ghat for river steamers we come to the 18th century house of the District Judge. Many old buildings on the high bank of the Ganges have disappeared, some after the great earthquake and some to make room for modern buildings like those of the Patna General Hospital. One fine old building still stands, and is now the home of Patna College. Some friezes in the interior have been attributed (without much evidence) to one of the Adam brothers; the exterior has been criticised by purists because of two styles of columns—Doric and Ionic—on the two storeys. Before reaching Patna College we see on the north of the road the Patna Oriental Library, founded by Khan Bahadur Khoda Buksh Khan. This is one of the most important oriental libraries in India; it contains a valuable collection, including books and manuscripts saved from Cordova University when the Moors were expelled from Spain.

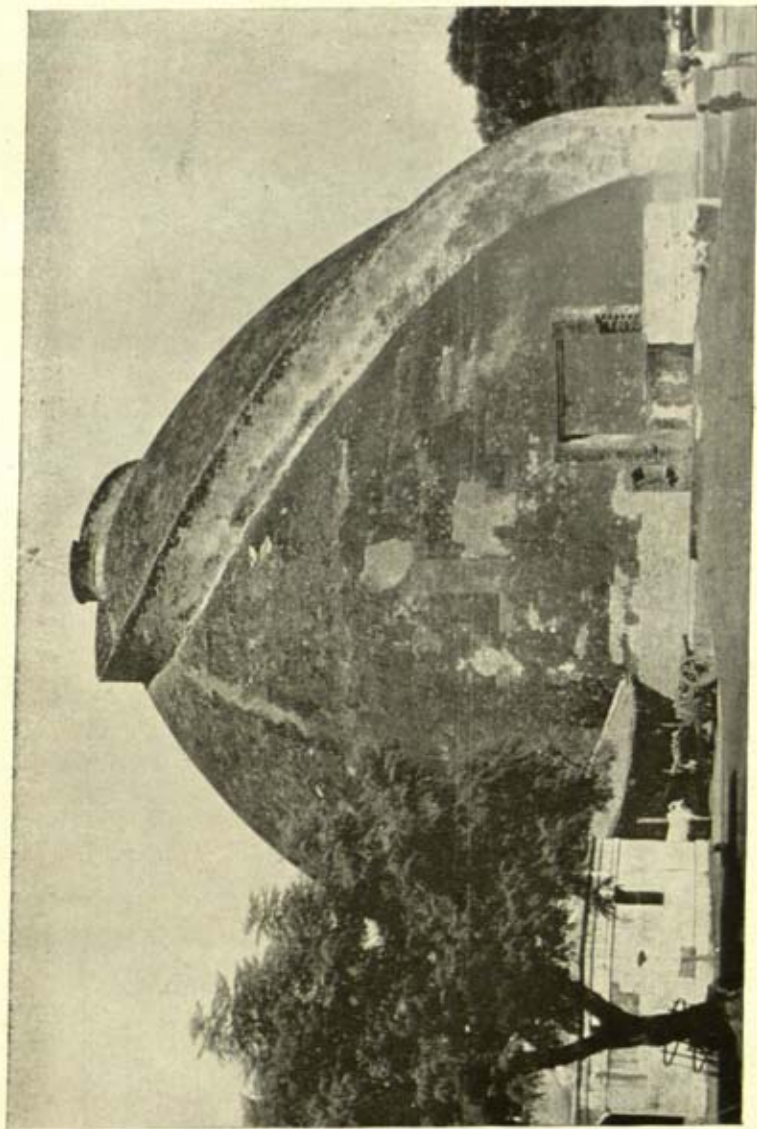
The house of the Principal of the Bihar College of Engineering is another old building, and near here is the tomb of Mir Afzal and a graceful mosque, with an inscription showing that the Emperor Farrukhsiyar, who was enthroned in a garden at this place, worshipped here. The next building of exceptional interest is the old English factory, now occupied by the Government Press, a fortified warehouse built early in the 18th century and used



for many years, as was narrated earlier, for the manufacture of opium. In a large upper room overlooking the Ganges the Emperor Shah Alam was enthroned.

On the river bank eastwards from this point, in Patna city proper, many large residential buildings once stood. The old Dutch factory has disappeared, but its massive revetments on the river can be seen. One the South of the main street is the mosque of Mirza Masum, built in 1616, in the reign of Jahangir. The obelisk in the Patna cemetery is a conspicuous object; it marks the well into which the victims of the Patna massacre were thrown. The Madrasa mosque (1629) stands near the river. A quarter of a mile from the cemetery is the Roman Catholic Church of the Blessed Virgin Mary, with its fine façade, locally known as the Padri Ki Haveli. It was built to the designs of the architect Tiretto in 1772 on the site of the older church, built in 1713, which had been destroyed in the troubles of 1763. Not far from the church is the old mosque of Alauddin Shah, built by the Sultan of Gaur in 1499. There are several other interesting mosques, including that of Fakrud Daula, Governor of Patna in the 1730's, that of Shaista Khan, the Ambar mosque, the stone mosque built by the Governor of Bihar in 1626, and the mosque built by Sher Shah in 1545. In a lane South of the main road in the heart of the city is the temple and shrine of Guru Govind Singh, who was born here in 1664. This is one of the sacred places of the Sikhs.

On the river bank beyond this point is the site of the Patna Fort built by Sher Shah. Mrs. Hastings stayed here in 1781, having moved from Dinapur, where she was awaiting her husband's return from Benares. By her example of calmness and courage she allayed the panic that seemed likely to spread, but after she left rumours of the approach of Chait's army caused many Europeans to take refuge in the Fort. The story goes that some of them were in their nightgowns. In the compound of the Fort is the residence of Dewan Bahadur Radha Krishna Jalan. The situation of the house on the high bank of the Ganges is magnificent, and the house is a museum containing one of the finest collection of jade, antiquities, old



The Patna Granary (The Gola) built in 1786



Zoffany's picture "Embassy of Hyderbeck to Calcutta from the vizier of Oude by the way of Patna in the year 1788 to meet Lord Cornwallis". The Patna granary can be seen on the left. The artist Zoffany is on the right on horseback.



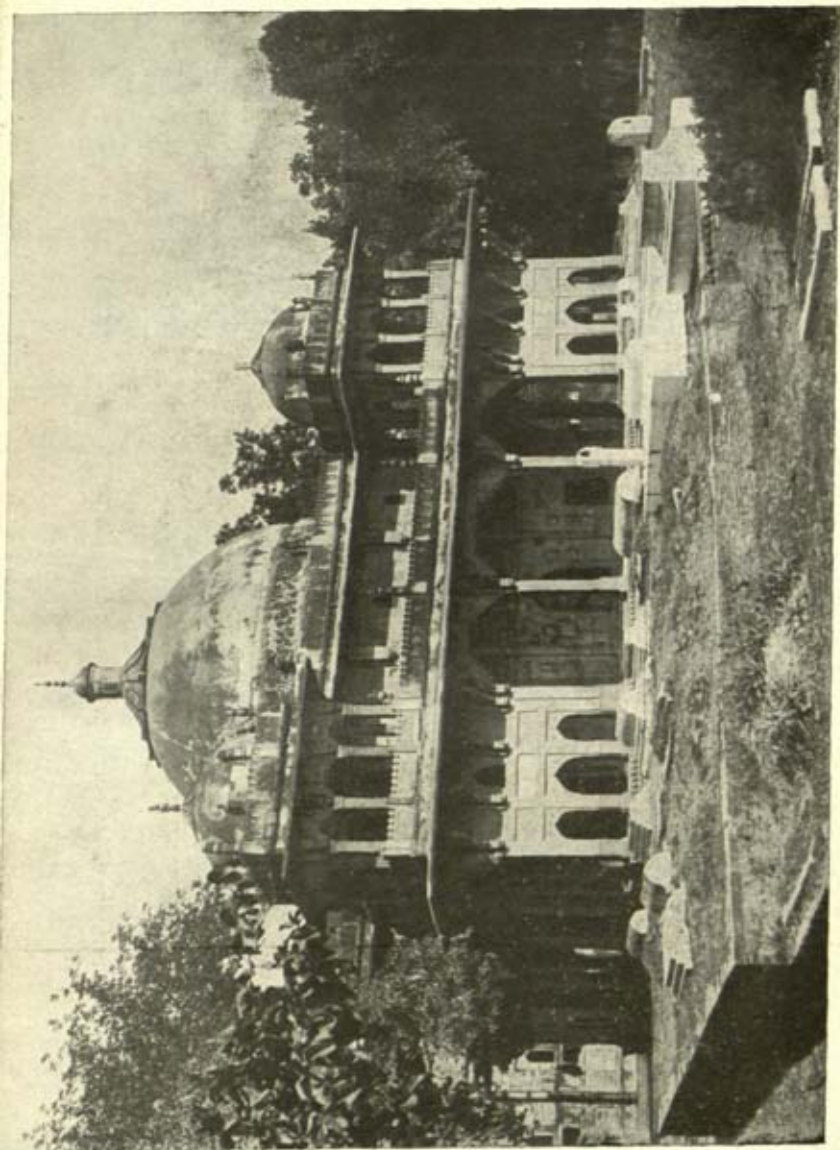
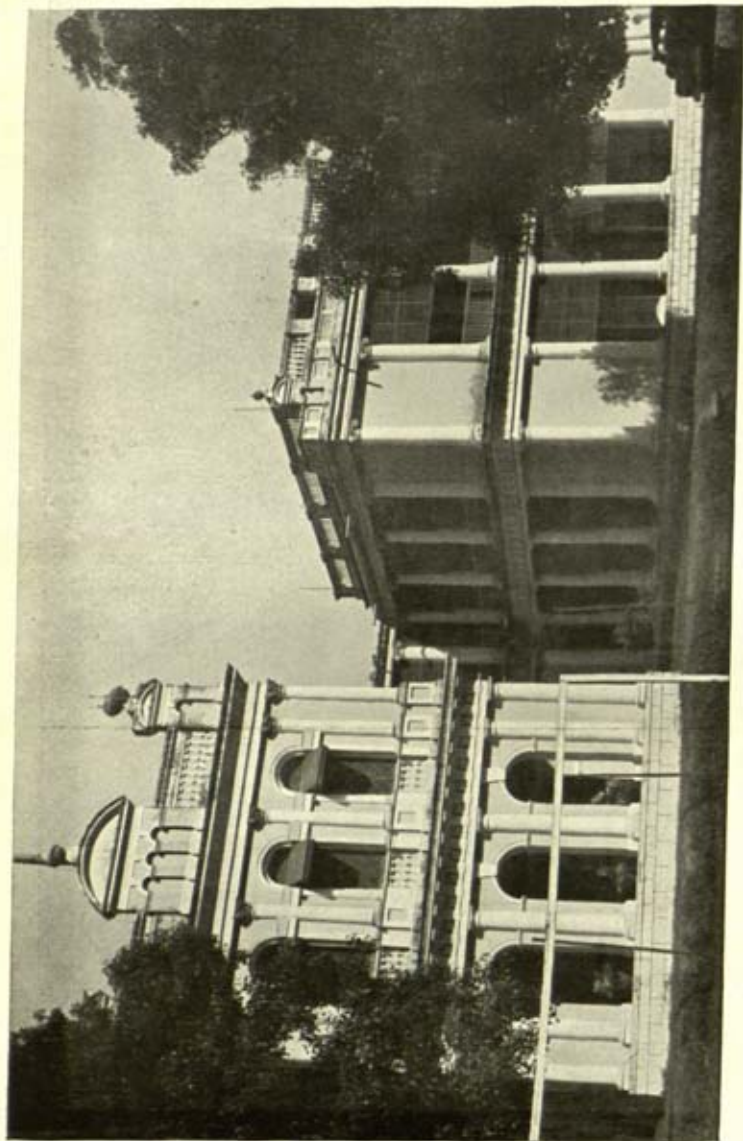


Photo: Archaeological Survey of India

The tomb of Makhdum Shah Daulat at Maner



*Patna College, built as a private residence in the eighteenth century*

engravings, and *objets d'art* in the country. Farther down the bank was the Danish factory. The residence of its founder, Berner, still stands here.

The New Capital of Patna was laid out after the creation of the new province, the architect being Mr. Munnings. The lay-out is spacious and has been favourably compared to New Delhi. The main avenue, King George Avenue, is a magnificent roadway 200 feet wide, with a double row of trees on each side. Many of these trees are *amullas* and Gold Mohur, and they are a fine sight when they are in flower in the early Summer.

The Patna museum is on the Patna-Gaya road. The Mauryan relics already mentioned are among its chief treasures. Another is the wonderful hoard of bronze and gilt images discovered at Kurkihar in the Gaya district a few years ago. Part of the well-known collection of coins was, unfortunately, stolen by burglars who broke into the building at night, but the collection is still a representative one. There are fine collections of Tibetan banners, and of paintings of various schools of Indian art, ancient and modern, including some fine paintings on ivory. There are also some very fine Persian manuscripts.

The Bihar Cottage Industries have their headquarters at Gulzarbagh, Patna. This Government controlled organization markets the products of many thousands of hand-loom workers in the province. One of the biggest centres for this industry is Bihar Sharif. The curtains, table-cloths, scarves and other hand-loom products marketed by the Bihar Cottage Industries have won a very high reputation for the artistic excellence of the designs and for their fast colours. There is a great demand for the products, (which cannot at present be met) in the United Kingdom and in Australia and elsewhere. Much of the excellence of these hand-loom products is due to the employment of expert designers, and insistence on good materials. One of the early designers was Mrs. Kilby and several other talented designers have left their mark on the products of the Bihar Cottage Industries. They have sales offices in most towns in the province, and the visitor would do well to inspect a selection of the articles.



The road from Patna to Arrah passes through Dinapur and near Maner, and crosses the Son by the great Koilwar bridge, which is now a combined rail and road bridge. Dinapur is the site of a military cantonment, founded soon after the middle of the 18th century, and when Bishop Heber visited it in the course of his journey up the Ganges in 1824, it had a fine quay on the river, looking "like a battery"; but the Ganges is now far away across the *diaras*. The bishop comments sternly on the disinclination of the officers and men to attend divine service, though it was "in orders" that they should attend. The only officer who ever came was the adjutant, and he could not get out of it. The neighbouring planters were even worse, for they never came to church except to be baptized, married or buried.

Maner once stood on the bank of the Son, but that river has moved several miles to the west. Among the tombs of Muhammadan saints and great men are those of Hazrat Makhdum Shah Daulat and Hazrat Makhdum Yahia Maneri. Soon after the death of Makhdum Shah Daulat in 1608 Ibrahim Khan, governor of Bihar, began the building of his tomb, known as the *Chhoti Dargah*, and regarded as the finest monument of the Moghuls in eastern India. The tomb of Yahia Maneri, the *Bari Dargah*, is a famous place of pilgrimage. He was a member of a family of saints among whom was his son Makhdum Sharif-ud-din, saint of Bihar town.

## CHAPTER VI

### PLACES OF INTEREST IN PATNA AND GAYA DISTRICTS

*Bihar Town—Nalanda—Rajgir—Giriak—Pawapuri—the Falls of Kakolat—Lorik*

IN dealing with the many places in Patna and Gaya districts which have historical associations, or which are sacred to Hindus or Muslims, I propose to confine my account to the more famous of the sites, and to divide them up into two tours; the first to include the town of Bihar, the monastery of Nalanda and Rajgir, and the second, the City of Gaya and Bodh Gaya, with some of the old sites in their vicinity.

Assuming that the visitor has made his headquarters at Patna, the road to Rajgir will take him through the city of Patna either by the main street or by the road at the back of the city along the flood-embankment. For twenty miles after leaving Patna, the road runs parallel to the Ganges, of the wide reaches of which fine views are obtained. We pass through Fatwa, where large bathing festivals are held, and which was the scene of much fighting in the last days of Muhummadan rule. Beglar relates a curious tradition in a village near here. A wandering *fakir* placed a curse on the village because a girl at the well, perhaps not liking his appearance, refused to give him a drink. A married lady rose to the occasion and gave him one. The curse was 'may the daughters of this village be husbandless (*beti ranr, bahu sohagin*).' It is believed that if a man does marry a girl from this village, he will not live long. If a wedding does take place, it is done on the quiet, with no music. Any young man who walks into this village playing a musical instrument does so at his peril, for it is plain that he has not heard of the



curse, and the village maidens being on the alert for such an eligible young man, he will soon find himself in the toils of matrimony.

At Bakhtiarpur we take the road to the right (unless we are travelling all the way by train; in which case we have to take the light railway from Bakhtiarpur to Bihar and Rajgir). We cross the low-lying plain known as the Tal, and see before us the isolated hill of Bihar, and beyond it the hills of Rajgir.

Bihar was an important place a thousand years ago. It was here that King Gopala built a great monastery (*vihara*) from which the town and the Province take their names. In 1197 Bakhtiyar Khilji at the head of 200 horsemen seized the town and sacked it. The 'shaven-headed' monks were slaughtered wholesale and only a few escaped. It was made the capital of the local Muhammadan governors until Sher Shah built the fort at Patna. The most ancient of the monuments in Bihar is a pillar with an inscription of the Gupta dynasty; a former subdivisional officer adorned it still further by carving on it the names of the local worthies, lawyers and others. (I recently saw this pillar, with its vandalistic inscriptions, on a veranda of the Patna museum, to which place it had been removed from Bihar). Traces of the great fort can still be seen; it must have been a splendid sight with its bastions and tall towers when it was in its hey-day.

The hill of Pir Pahari, close to Bihar, is the last break in the level plains of Bihar south of the foothills of the Himalayas. Climbing the gentle slope of the hill on its southern side one is surprised to find, on reaching the top, that the northern side is a sheer cliff, with isolated pillars of stone and caverns in the rocks, as though the waves of some prehistoric ocean had once thundered against it. There are remains of ancient Buddhist buildings on the hill. On the summit is the *dargah* of the great saint of Bihar, Mallik Ibrahim Bayu, who died in 1353, surrounded by a number of smaller tombs and on the level ground near the river is the *dargah* of another great man—Hazrat Shah Sharif-ud-din, held in great veneration by the local Muhammadans. There are several other



Mosques and *dargahs* in this old stronghold of the Muhammadans.

Mr. Beglar relates a local legend of a Muhammadan saint or *pir* and a Hindu holy man and magician, in which the *pir* got the worst of it, but which points a pleasant moral. For some years after the Muhammadan conquest of Bihar town Hindus were excluded from the fort area, but one day it was found that a Hindu magician had infiltrated into the forbidden ground. This came to the ears of the *pir* who lived on the hill at Bihar, and he decided to get rid of the intruder. He therefore sent him a present of a parcel containing some roast beef, with a polite note. The parcel came back unopened, with an equally polite reply in which the magician regretted having to refuse the gift. When the parcel was opened it was found that the beef had been transformed into sweetmeats. Impressed by this, the *pir* set out to visit the magician, riding on a tiger. The magician was seated on a wall, cleaning his teeth, and seeing the *pir* coming he stuck the toothbrush in the ground and ordered the wall to go and meet the distinguished visitor. The wall at once got up, with the magician astride of it, and went to meet the *pir*. The *pir* handsomely acknowledged defeat, and he and the magician became friends, and agreed that in future Hindus and Muhammadans should live in peace together, the Hindus agreeing to hear the call to prayer, and the Muhammadans the sound of the conch, without offence. As a proof of the truth of this story the local people point to a *nim* tree which grew up where the magician stuck the toothbrush.

Taking the road or light railway to the south-west we come to the village of Bargaon, the site of the great monastery of Nalanda. This was one of the most famous centres of learning of the ancient world, but at some period after Buddhism in Eastern India had entered on its decline—probably after the first Muhammadan invasions—it fell back into obscurity and was finally abandoned. The monastery buildings were gradually covered under hillocks of earth and sand, the accumulations of centuries, and the very site was forgotten. Not until the latter half

of the 19th century was it established, by the rather amateurish excavations of Broadley, the Subdivisional officer to whom we owe the inscriptions of the names of local lawyers on the Gupta pillar that the mounds of Bargaulon marked the site of Nalanda. Large-scale excavations have now exposed many of the cells and courtyards and a massive tower.

The Master of the Law, Hieuen Tsiang, was an honoured guest at Nalanda over thirteen hundred years ago, and he has left this vivid description of the buildings as he saw them:—

One gate opens into the great college, from which eight other halls are separated, in the middle of the monastery. The richly adorned towers and the fairy-like turrets, like pointed hill-tops, are congregated together. The observatories seem to be lost in the mists of the morning, and the upper rooms tower above the clouds. All the outside courts, in which are the priests' chambers, are of four stages. The stages have dragon projections and coloured eaves; the pearl red pillars, carved and ornamented, the richly adorned balustrades, and the roofs covered with tiles that reflect the light in a thousand shades—these things add to the beauty of the scene.

Round about Nalanda is a series of large artificial lakes of unknown antiquity. One of them must be nearly three miles round. In the cold weather they are visited by great flocks of wild duck and teal.

About eight miles farther to the south west, the road or light railway takes us to Rajgir. Passing through the modern village of Rajgir we are actually on the site of the new city, built, as we have seen, by Bimbisara (though one tradition says that it was his son Ajatasatru). Anyhow its "newness" has worn off a bit, for it is now about 2,400 years old. Part of the stone walls of the old citadel can be seen in a good state of preservation near the inspection bungalow.

The Rajgir hills are places of pilgrimage for the people of many faiths, for here are the scenes of many events in Hindu mythology; on the hill-tops and in caves Gautama



Buddha spent many months in contemplation; Mahavira also paid many a visit to the hills, and many Jains come on pilgrimage to the temples and places associated with their leader. To the Muslims also Rajgir has special associations, for the saint of Bihar, Makhdum Shah Sharif-uddin, spent years in prayer and meditation in the hills.

Going towards the gap in the hills from the inspection bungalow, we come to the hot springs of Rajgir. There are 13 of these springs, one of which is sacred to the Muslims and is known as Makhdum Khund. The visitor from abroad will be disappointed with the condition of the springs, and it is to be hoped that the government will see its way to enclosing them in a proper setting and having them properly looked after and used. The water of the springs has been analysed by experts, and in most of them it was found to be of high radio activity.

The hill on the right of the road into the hills is the Vaibhara hill. On it is a very old stone building, locally known as Jarasandha's seat, which is mentioned by Hieuen Tsiang as the place where Buddha visited Kasyapa. Farther up the hill-side are several Jain temples, of which the largest, that of Adinatha, is in a splendid position on a ridge, and a ruined structure known as the temple of Mahadeva. On the side of the hill below the temples are the Saptaparni caves and the terrace where the first Buddhist Council is believed to have been held, a few months after the death of Buddha. Ajatasatru is said to have built a hall on the terrace to accommodate the monks who took part in the Council.

Entering the valley through the gap in the hills where stood the north gate of the old city, we see, on the hillside to the east, traces of the cyclopean outer walls. Half a mile to the south, following the modern road, the road brings us to an ancient site called Maniyar Math. This was a mound surmounted by a shrine, and was excavated by General Cunningham about a hundred years ago, and by Dr. Bloch in 1905. Inside the mound was a brick structure, now covered by a roof, and a number of very interesting stucco figures of the Gupta period, most of which have unfortunately since crumbled away. Some queer jars with



numerous spouts projecting all round them were also found here, and are now preserved in the museum at Nalanda (Rajgir has at present no museum of its own).

A short distance to the north-west of Maniyar Math are the old Jain caves of Sonbhandar, and three quarters of a mile to the south are the ruins of a building which, according to local traditions, is the prison where king Bimbisara was confined under the orders of his son. A short distance south of this place the road passes through a gap in the inner walls of the city, and from the top of the wall a good view can be obtained of a part of the outer wall as it crosses a valley and climbs the southern hill. An ancient road known as Bimbisara's causeway leads eastwards up the slope of mount Gridhrakuta, the 'hill of the vultures,' which was one of Buddha's favourite retreats. From the jail the road turns to the south-west towards the Banganga pass, where it leaves the hills. About three hundred yards short of the pass there are some ancient inscriptions in the Shell character cut in the rock, and close by can be seen the ruts worn in the rock by the wheels of chariots and carts long ago. Finally we come to the Banganga pass and the southern gate of Old Rajgir; and on the hillsides stand the massive outer walls, still fairly well preserved at this point, after exposure to the weather for perhaps three thousand years.

The visitor can save himself much trouble and energy and time if he takes a car on this tour through the old city, getting out to visit places of interest on the way. The road through the Banganga pass goes on to Hasua, and thence to Gaya or Nawada, but it is motorable only in the dry weather, and even then there is a difficult sandy river-bed to cross.

The two other principal sites in this area are Giriak and Pawapuri, both on the way from Bihar town to Nawada. On the hill west of Giriak is a cave venerated for its associations with Buddha, and the remains of many Buddhist buildings are scattered around the village. The ruined stupa on the hill above the Panchana river is another place known as Jarasandha's seat. The Buddhist legend is that it commemorates the spot where a goose fell from



*Photo: Archaeological Survey of India*

*Nalanda*



*From the summit of the Bihar hill, looking north  
over the plains of Bihar*





*The fourteenth century tomb of the great  
Muhammadan Saint of Bihar, Malik Ibrahim Baya*



heaven in response to their prayer for food. The pious monks buried the goose and erected the stupa over it. The embankment along the base of the northern slope of the hills is the Asurenbandh, about which the Kahars have the legend which is mentioned in Chapter IX.

It was from Giriak that the author of 'Rambles in Bihar' set out on his journey across a part of the Rajgir hills to Silao. Night fell while they were still in the hills. He thus describes the journey:—

With drawn sword in my hand and a loaded gun by my side I passed on. Wild boars, tigers, wolves and monkeys and other ferocious animals were making dreadful noise from the hills on either side. The whole scene was dreadful, but the Kahars went on silently and rapidly, the peons keeping pace with lanterns, one in front and the other behind. To our joy the moon rose and shone with all its bright effulgence, as we covered half the way. It was a great relief indeed. We had the good fortune to enjoy the perfect calm and awe-inspiring loneliness that reigned supreme except for the howling of wild animals at intervals. It was midnight when we reached Silao all safe and sound, and there poured forth our earnest prayers to God almighty for our safe arrival and for the joyous spirit that stood us in good stead while in the midst of that dreadful scene.

When I read this account I felt a glow of admiration for the worthy lawyer, who had set out from Patna on his great adventure on a litter borne by his eight Kahar carriers. His plan was to visit the ancient temples and holy sites in the villages of the Patna district. The dangers which he describes, on that journey through the hills, were largely imaginary, but they were real enough to him, and he faced them like a brave man.

At Pawapuri, sacred to the Jains, Mahavira was cremated. The holy temple of Lal-Mandar stands in the midst of a large lake. On a mound near the lake, on which Mahavira is said to have sat to preach to his followers, there is a small temple containing his foot-prints. There are numerous large fish in the lake which are fed



by the priests, and are of course never molested by man.

There is one beauty-spot in the forests of south-east Gaya which may be mentioned here, as it is easily accessible from Nawada. This is the waterfall of Kakolat, near Ektara, sixteen miles south-east of Nawada near a motorable road, which branches off the main road a few miles south of Nawada. These are beautiful and imposing falls, especially in the rains, and are in pleasant wooded surroundings. The hills are a continuation of the spur which projects from the Chota Nagpur plateau to the north of Kodarma, and which contains many sites famous in mythology. The peaks near Rajauli were the homes of Lomas Rishi and the irascible Durvadas, and of Rishya Sringa. Dubaur, at the foot of these hills, is believed by the local people to be the birthplace of one of the most famous characters in the songs and legends of Bihar, the cow-herd Lorik.

The Ahirs sing interminable songs about the exploits of their hero. The opening stanzas relate the old old story of the young and beautiful wife and the decrepit husband, the bold young lover, the flight of the lovers, and the pursuit by the infuriated husband. The husband duly caught them up, but Lorik had no difficulty in beating him in the ensuing fight. The lovers pursued their leisurely way, and came to Bargaon (old Nalanda) where lived the king of the gamblers, Mahapitya, a Dosadh by caste. Lorik could not resist a gamble, but the luck was against him, and he had soon lost everything, including Chandain, his beloved, to the gambler king. The winner had been smitten by the beauty of Chandain, and got up to bear away his prize. 'Not yet' said Chandain 'I still have some jewels, and you have not yet gambled for those.' The two men sat down to gamble again, and this time the young minx, by a trick even more unsporting than that by which Venus won the apple, caused the gambler king to turn goggle eyes towards her and to lose his concentration on the game. Lorik won back all his losses, and also all the possessions of his opponent. I am sorry to have to say that the young lady then complained to her lover

of the lascivious glances cast at her by Mahapitya, and that Lorik, filled with righteous indignation, sliced off his head with one blow. Lorik's adventures took him and Chandain to many places and kingdoms, where his strength and courage always gave him the victory, and in due course he became reconciled to his faithful wife; not, however, giving up Chandain.



## CHAPTER VII

### GAYA AND BODH GAYA

#### *Caves of the Barabar Hills*

It is unfortunately not practicable to motor direct to Gaya. The visitor must go from Patna either by train or by the roundabout road through Bakhtiarpur, Bihar and Nawada. Gaya is a picturesque city. Rocky hills, most of them crowned by temples, surround it, and even jut into the town. In the old city many of the lanes are narrow, with tall, overhanging houses, like the old streets of London before the fire. It is a place of great sanctity and a very important place of pilgrimage, the central point of which is the Vishnupad temple, which enshrines the footprints of Vishnu. The temple was built in the 18th century by the Maratha princess Ahalyabati. Two of the bells are interesting; one was presented by a Minister of Nepal, and the other, in 1790, by Mr. Francis Gillanders, who is known to have been the Collector of the old pilgrim tax. The hills round the city are also places of sanctity. The highest is that of Brahmajuni, which rises precipitately to a height of 450 feet from the plain. A flight of steps helps the pilgrims in their climb up the sacred hill.

The Gayawals are the hereditary priests who give their blessing to pilgrims on the completion of their pilgrimage. They are an influential community, but not as prosperous as in former days, and many families have died out.

Six miles south of Gaya is the great temple of Bodh Gaya, one of the holiest places in the world, and the most sacred of all places to Buddhists. It was near the sacred Bodhi tree, the descendant of which stands at the base of the temple, that Gautama Buddha attained Enlightenment. Many places in the vicinity are hallowed by associations with him. It was in the 3rd century B.C. that Asoka built



a monastery and temple here, and gave 100,000 pieces of gold for the purpose.

The tree was already held in the greatest veneration in Asoka's time, as is shown by the magnificence of the ceremonies when a branch was sent to Ceylon in his reign. There are stories that Asoka himself cut the tree down in his unregenerate days, and that after he had begun to reverence it, his wife had it cut down again in a fit of jealousy. In course of time the temple fell into decay, and the present temple was built. Experts differ about the date, but it was probably before A.D. 500. A great monastery was built to the North of the Bodhi tree by Meghavarna, King of Ceylon, in the reign of Samudra Gupta, and was richly adorned with gold and precious stones. About A.D. 600 king Sasanka, a fanatical enemy of Buddhism, again destroyed the Bodhi tree, but it was soon replaced by the king of Magadha. Hieuen Tsiang saw the temple in the first half of the 7th century, and at that time the tree was flourishing, and there were hundreds of stupas and *chaityas* (Buddhist shrines) around it, erected by faithful pilgrims. In the time of the temple's prosperity hundreds of Chinese pilgrims visited it, and left memorials of their visit. Burmese pilgrims and Missions also came.

It is probable that the temple was sacked and its treasures (or such as had not been hidden) removed, in the first Muhammadan invasions of the end of the 12th century. With the decay of Buddhism, the temple was more and more neglected. It stood almost deserted for centuries, gradually falling into ruin, until, when Buchanan Hamilton saw it in 1811, it was in a state of extreme decay.

In 1876 the king of Burma obtained permission from the Government of India to restore it, but in the end the Government itself undertook the work, and the Public Works Department rebuilt the temple with the results which we see now. The general design of the building has no doubt been retained, but in details of sculpture and ornamentation it can give only a faint idea of what it must have looked like in its prime. Those interested in the architecture of the great temple may compare it as it stands now with the very 'free' copy made from memory by

a pious pilgrim in Kathmandu after his return from the pilgrimage. Percival Landon, in his work on 'Nepal', mentions another copy of the Bodh Gaya temple near Pekin; but, as Landon says, these temples are little more than 'echoes' of the great temple which the pilgrims had seen. The great pagoda at Gyantse in Tibet is also said to have been modelled on the Bodh Gaya Temple.

When the work of restoration was undertaken, the precincts of the temple were deep in the accumulations of ages and deposits of sand from the neighbouring river Nilajan, so that the ruined temple was partly buried. Of the objects to be seen at this holy site the most sacred is the tree itself, and in its shade is the Diamond Throne,—the seat of Asoka, with its interesting carvings. Mr. O'Malley (in the *Gaya Gazetteer*) mentions that the throne stands on a brick platform with boldly moulded figures of men and lions, but I have been unable to find such a decorated platform. According to him one of the faces was found by the 'restorers' to contain a valuable treasure of gold and precious stones. Perhaps it is not a matter of surprise if other faces have suffered.

The carved stone railing on the south and west of the temple is one of the oldest and most interesting monuments in India. The oldest part of the railing is of sandstone, and is ascribed to the 2nd or 1st century B.C. and the portion made of granite is believed to have been constructed in the Gupta period. The ancient railing was no doubt re-arranged so as to enclose the larger temple which was constructed to take the place of that erected in Mauryan times. The pillars, coping stones and rail-bars are adorned with a fascinating series of sculptures representing animals and birds, fabulous creatures, flowers, medallions of kings, and scenes of every-day life or mythical and religious subjects. Hours could be spent in the study of these beautiful sculptures. On the north of the temple are the remains of columns which mark the place where Buddha paced up and down after his enlightenment, and where, the story goes, flowers sprang up beneath his feet. The courtyard is crowded with shrines of all sizes left by pilgrims during 2,000



years or more. Of the other treasures of the temple and its precincts I can mention here only a few. The fine Toran granite gateway to the east of the temple, dating from the 4th or 5th century A.D., had fallen among the debris and was re-erected when the temple was restored. In a small building to the east of the temple the visitor can see a massive circular blue stone, with strange carvings on it. Some have held that this, and not the stone now beneath the tree, is the ancient Diamond Throne. (Beglar gives a careful drawing of the design on the stone, which is not easy to make out). In a building to the north of the temple large numbers of pieces of sculptured stone and other relics found during the restoration may be seen.

Visitors are always courteously received by the Mahanth and his assistants. There is a bungalow where visitors can rest and take their food, but, as nearly everywhere in the Province, there is no staff for providing meals, and visitors must bring their food with them.

At Kurkihar, 16 miles east of Gaya, a great find of metal images, mainly of Buddha, was made in 1930, in an underground chamber accidentally revealed by workmen. Many of these date from the time of the Pala kings. As already noted, the images are now housed in the Patna museum.

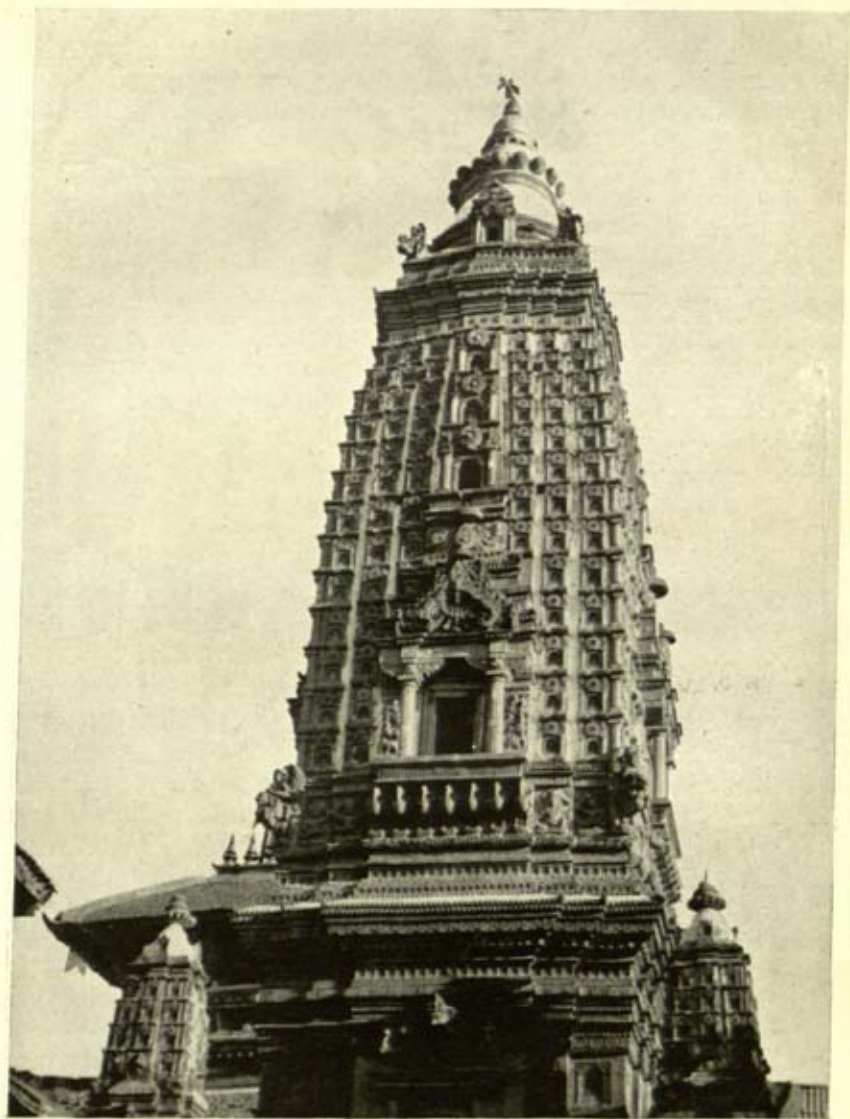
The hill-ranges which run north-eastwards from near Gaya towards Giriak and Rajgir, and the hills south of the road to Nawada, are full of the remains of ancient shrines and monasteries, and contain many places associated with the life of Buddha. There is little tree-forest on the hills, the southern slopes being particularly bare. But many of them are picturesque, and quarrying on the face of some of the hills north of the Gaya-Nawada road has revealed the lovely colours of the rocks. There are leopards in many of the hills, including the beautiful black variety.

We must leave this most interesting locality and return to Gaya in order to visit the last of the ancient sites of the district which we shall have space to deal with here—the Barabar hills. These hills are 6 to 8 miles east of Bela railway station, the second station from Gaya on the way to Patna. There is also a motorable road from Gaya.



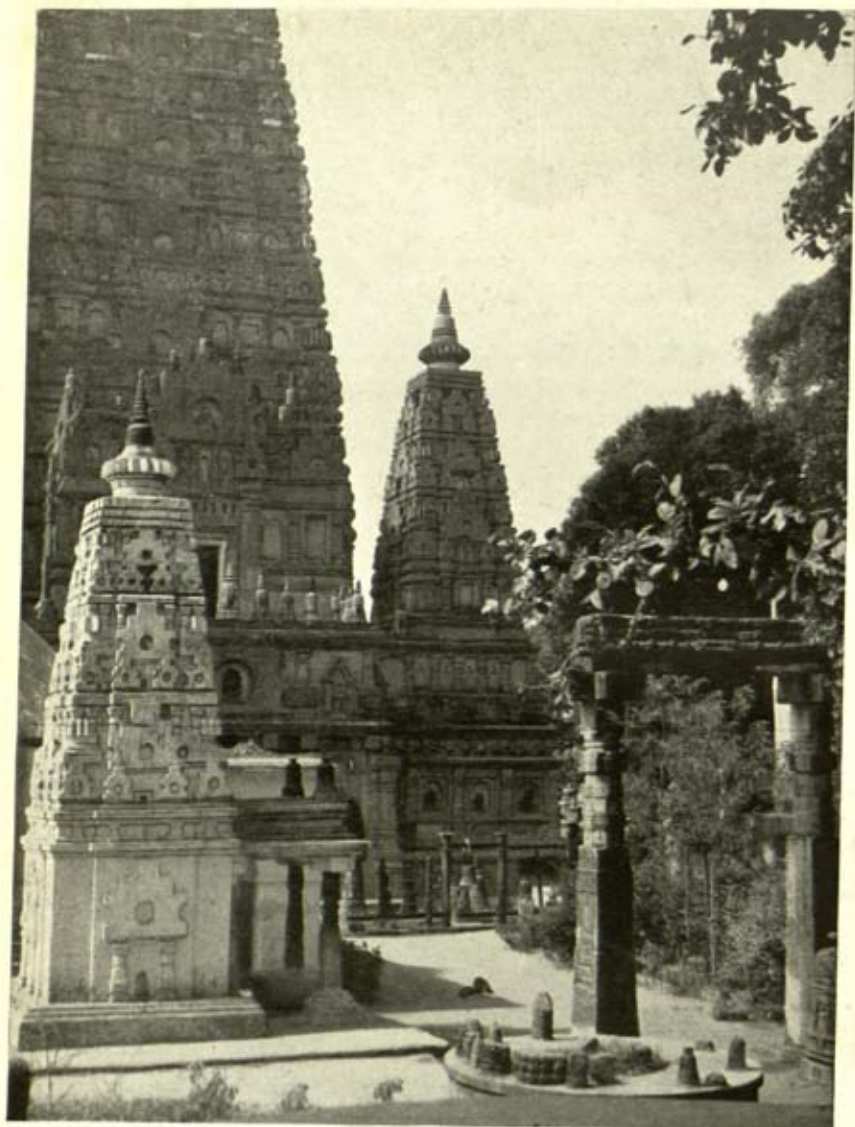
South of the range the visitor will see the detached hill called Kauwadol, crowned by a huge block of stone. There was formerly another large boulder on the top of this block, and it was so poised that the slightest impulse, —even a crow perching on it—would cause it to rock. This is the site of the ancient Silabhadra monastery, the remains of which can be seen at the base of the hill. In the ruins is a magnificent statue of Buddha, one of the largest in India, and many carvings in relief can be seen on the rocks on the hillside. In a valley in the hill-range there is a sacred spring called Pathaldanga, where a bathing festival is held in the month of Bhado (August-September).

On a low ridge of granite in the southern corner of the valley are the famous Barabar caves. The hard granite of the interior of these caves has been given an amazing polish. The large cave called the hut of Karna bears an inscription which shows that it was made in the reign of Asoka, in the third century B.C. The Sudama and Lomasrishi caves were never completed. The sculptured doorway of the latter clearly imitates a wooden structure. The fourth cave on this ridge is to the east in a large block of granite; it consists of two chambers, one of them polished. This cave also bears an Asokan inscription. There are three more caves on a ridge of the hills half a mile farther east, which were excavated in the reign of Asoka's grandson Dasaratha. The reader of E. M. Forster's book *A Passage to India* will recall the incident of which the scene is in one of these caves.



*The temple of Mahabuddha at Patan, near Kathmandu in Nepal, built by a pious traveller in 1580 as a copy, from memory, of the Bodh Gaya temple*

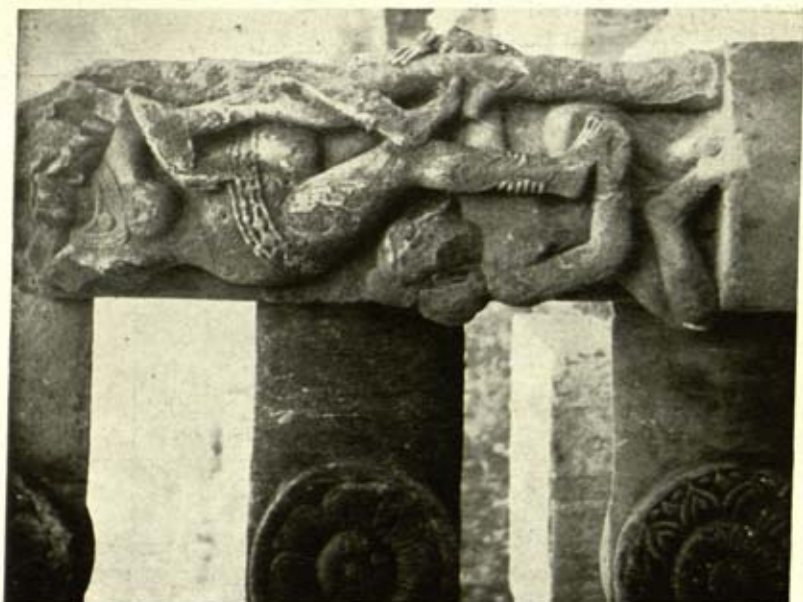




*Courtyard of the Bodh Gaya temple, with ancient granite gateway on right*



*Carvings on pillars of the stone railing, Bodh Gaya*



*Carvings on pillars of the stone railing, Bodh Gaya*



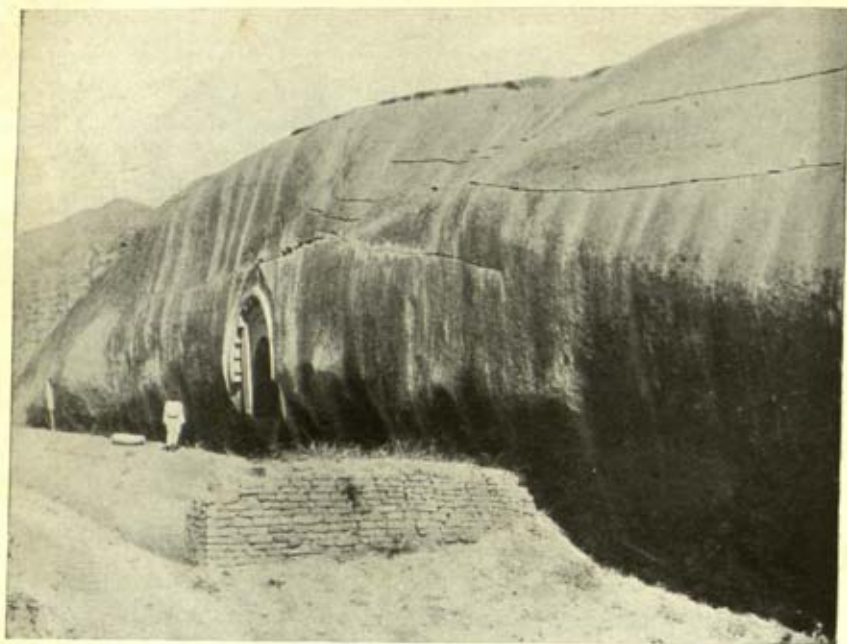


Photo: Archaeological Survey of India

Entrance to the Lomas Rishi cave,  
Barabar hills



Photo: Archaeological Survey of India

Entrance to the Lomas Rishi cave,  
Barabar hills

## CHAPTER VIII

### THE PEOPLE OF PATNA AND GAYA DISTRICTS

THE importance of Patna and other towns on the bank of the Ganges, as centres of trade, began to decline after the opening of the East Indian Railway main line along the south bank of the river. The population of Patna city declined fairly considerably, and the district as a whole showed a decline for the thirty years before 1921, partly as a result of severe outbreaks of epidemic disease. From that date onwards the population has increased considerably, the increase between 1921 and 1941 being 27 per cent, so that the density in Patna district is now about 1,000 per square mile. In Gaya district the density is less—582 to the square mile, as the southern part of the district is hilly and sparsely inhabited.

Patna and Gaya are both important rice-growing districts ('Patna rice' is well-known in many parts of the world, though it does not all come from Patna), and the numerous class of writers on India's food-problems usually classify the population of the districts as rice-eating. They forget that there are millions of people in the rice-growing areas who eat very little rice, because they cannot afford it. Thus in Patna and Gaya districts the staple food of the poorer classes, that is the great majority of the people, is not rice but one or other of the coarse grains or pulses, which are cheaper than rice. The principal of these are *marua* and *arhar*, with maize and wheat-flour when they can get it.

The common language of the inhabitants of old Magadha is Magahi, a language which is very similar to Maithili, but has the unfortunate feature of finishing questions with the ending *re*. In other parts of India this expression is a rather rude and contemptuous one. The effect in English would be something like a rustic calling



out to some haughty passer-by ' Here, you, how far is it to Gaya ?' It is said that the innocent questioner sometimes gets a kick from the angry foreigner by way of reply. Muslims use the Urdu language and script, but the dialect used by many Muslims and Kaisths is Awadhi (the language of Oudh which is possibly a relic of the old court language of Lucknow).

By far the most numerous of the Hindu castes are the Goalas or Ahirs, who are primarily herdsmen, but also practise cultivation. Other numerous castes are Babhans or Bhuinhar-Brahmans, mainly land-holders and well-to-do cultivators; Rajputs (numerous in Gaya district)—mainly cultivators; Dosadhs, cultivators and labourers; Koiris, famous as excellent cultivators and market-gardeners; and Kurmis, cultivators, labourers and servants. There is also, in the Gaya district, a large population of Bhuiyas, a people of aboriginal descent. Brahmans are fairly numerous, particularly in Gaya. Among other fairly numerous castes are Chamars (leather workers, etc.); Telis (oilmen); Musahars and Rajwars (both of aboriginal descent); Hajams (barbers) and Pasis (people engaged in the toddy trade). With many of the " functional " castes there is a definite tendency to break away from the narrow scope of their ancestral occupations, and towards general uplift and improvement in social status.

There are many peculiar and interesting customs and religious observances among this people of so many types and origins. Many people of the lower castes, though worshipping the orthodox Hindu gods, also propitiate the evil spirits and godlings which their ancestors worshipped from time immemorial. There is also a good deal of worship by the lower Hindu classes of Muhammadan saints. One Muhammadan custom which many Hindus have adopted is the launching of paper boats on the Ganges after a marriage or birth, in honour of the saint Khwaja Khizr.

A custom peculiar to the Kahars of Gaya district is the worship of wolves. This is based on the story of a Kahar boy being carried off by a wolf, but the villagers caught up with the wolf, and ' induced it to give the boy up '.



Whether this is a memory of a 'wolf child' or an ordinary case of a child being carried off by a wolf to be killed and eaten is not clear. (The belief in 'wolf children' is very persistent in India. The usual story is that a female wolf comes across a human child and suckles it, either with her own cubs, or when she has lost them. The child grows up among the wolves and hunts with them. There are various accounts of such children having been captured, and of their wolf-like behaviour, etc.)

The Kahars have another legend which goes back to mythological times, and to king Jarasandha of old Rajgir. The king, in an unguarded moment, offered the hand of his daughter and half his kingdom to anyone who would bring a stream of water in a single night to his garden, where the plants were dying for want of water, from the river Ganges (Ganga). The Kahar chief undertook the task, and his men built the embankment called the Asuren-Bandh near Giriak. They then began to lift the water from the stream known as the Bawan Ganga to the level of the garden. They were getting on well, and the night was only half gone, while the king paced up and down in despair at the prospect of giving his daughter in marriage to a Kahar, to say nothing of losing half his kingdom. A *pipal* tree near the embankment saw his dilemma and crowed like a cock. The Kahars thought that dawn was at hand, and threw down their tools and ran, fearing the anger of the king at their presumption in hoping for the hand of his daughter. They did not stop until they reached Mokamah.

The Goalas or Ahirs have one strange custom. On the day after the Dewali, or festival of lights, they make an offering to the god Basawan, and on that night the cattle are left without food. On the following morning the Goalas paint their horns red and daub red spots on their bodies. They then turn them into a field in which is an unfortunate pig with its legs tied together, and drive them over the pig until it is trampled or gored to death.

The Kurmis worship a selection of deities and saints, in addition to the orthodox Hindu gods, and they are great

believers in evil spirits. Sickness is believed to be the work of an evil spirit which gets into the sick person, and can be cast out by means of the more powerful familiar spirit of the sorcerer. Having successfully turned the evil spirit out, the sorcerer makes sure of it by bottling it up in a bamboo tube or earthen jar and then burying it.

In one of the ceremonies of the Dusadhs fire-walking is done, and barren women keep small pieces of the charcoal after the ceremony, in the belief that this is a charm to help them to bear children. The Telis were once a powerful clan, and in the days when Buddhism flourished their great men were responsible for the setting up of some famous monuments, including a colossal image of Buddha at Nalanda and a great doorway at the same place. One of the poorest of the castes are the Musahars, whose standard of living is of the lowest, and who eke out their diet with rats, frogs, cats, squirrels and almost any animal they can get hold of. The Pasi climbing up the tall and slender trunks of palm-trees is a common sight in Bihar, but I have never ceased to admire the skill and muscular endurance of these men, who will go up a seventy foot palm-tree at a surprising pace, with a halt for breath on the way, helped only by a thong joining their feet, which they use to get a grip on the tiny ledges which encircle the trunk.

About the Dhanuks, a small caste now mainly employed in digging and similar work, Colonel Waddell has a theory which I think illustrates very well the continuity of events in this ancient country. Many of the people who now inhabit Magadha are undoubtedly the descendants of the non-Aryan inhabitants who were here in the earliest days of the kingdom. The Dhanuks, as their name shows, were originally archers, and Colonel Waddell discovered that the people who live in Patna City along the line of the old Mauryan ramparts are nearly all Dhanuks. They are believed to be the descendants of the bowmen who manned the battlements, perhaps as hereditary watchers on the city walls, more than 2,000 years ago.

To the majority of the Hindus of Patna and Gaya the object of the most frequent worship is the goddess Kali.



In the form of Durga she is the tutelary goddess of Patna City, and as Sitala she is worshipped by all and sundry when small-pox breaks out. In fact the propitiation of Sitala is the only precaution taken by great numbers of people in a small-pox epidemic, and many of the poorer people do not get their children vaccinnated for fear of offending the goddess.

Muhammadans, mainly Sunnis, are more numerous in Patna and Gaya districts than in the adjoining districts. In the Gaya district many of them are the descendants of soldiers of the Moghul armies. In the neighbourhood of Daudnagar and Nawada the comparatively large number of Muhammadans is due to the facts that Daudnagar was for a long time a centre of Muslim power as the domain of Daud Khan, while Nawada was long held by the military leaders Namdar Khan and Kamgar Khan. The Muhammadans of Patna district worship reverence *pirs* or holy men, and there are many pilgrimages to their tombs (*dargahs*). The best known of the *dargahs* are those of Mallik Ibrahim Bayu and Hazrat Shah Sharif-ud-din at Bihar Sharif; Yahia Maneri and Shah Daulat at Maner; Shihab-ud-din Jagjaut and Shah Adam Sufi at Jethuli, on the bank of the Ganges just east of Patna; and the four saints Mansur, Maruf, Jafar and Mehdi (after whom four *mahallas* (wards) were named) and the shrine of Shah Ardani at Patna itself.

At Maner the memory of Ghazi Mian, nephew of Mahmud of Ghazni and a youthful hero—he was killed in battle at the age of nineteen—is commemorated by large numbers of people, low-caste Hindus as well as Muhammadans, at an annual fair. The event is made the occasion of much toddy-drinking, and is frowned on by the respectable. At this fair women and girls who are supposed to be possessed of devils prostrate themselves before a shrine, and work themselves up into an ecstatic condition, from which they pass into a trance or coma and when they recover from this they are supposed to be cured.

One of the *dargahs* of local fame in a village in Gaya district preserves the memory of a pious man who secretly resolved to return to his native Delhi without his wife. But



he had reckoned without the powerful effects of the lady's prayers, and every time he set out on the journey, and lay down to rest at the end of the day's march, he woke up to find himself back at home with his wife. In the end he gave up the idea of going away, and stayed where he was with his devoted spouse.

## CHAPTER IX

### SHAHABAD

#### *History—Sher Shah—Battle of Buxar—Kuar Singh*

THE district of Shahabad (headquarters, Arrah) is the country between the Ganges on the north, the Son on the east, and the Karamnasa on the west. Most of the district is a flat plain, but in south it includes a hill tract of 800 square miles, the Kaimur plateau. In the west of the district, the right bank of the Ganges is composed of hard gravel which resists the force of the current, but lower down the banks crumble easily when the swollen river impinges on them in the rains. The channels of the river are constantly changing their course and this leads to the inundation of belts of land, and the building up by deposits of silt and sand of other belts of land, called *diaras*. The *diaras* often become very valuable agricultural land, and rival claims to the proprietary right and the right to cultivate them give rise to a great deal of litigation and many riots, in which bloodshed often occurs.

The Son rises in Central India and drains a hill area of 21,300 square miles. After passing the steep escarpments of the Kaimur range, it flows straight across the plain to the Ganges. For much of this distance it is over two miles—and at one point, opposite Tilothu—three miles wide. In the dry weather there is a vast expanse of sand, with a stream not more than a hundred yards wide, and the hot west winds pile up the sand on the east bank, making natural embankments. After heavy rain in the hills even this wide bed cannot carry the waters of the Son, and disastrous floods in Shahabad, Gaya, and Patna are not uncommon. As we have seen, the Son has changed its course in its lower reaches, and once joined the Ganges below Patna. Even in Akbar's time the junction was at



Maner—it is now ten miles above Maner. The Son is crossed by the two great railway bridges of the East India Railway—on the Grand Chord line at Dehri, and the Main line at Koilwar, a few miles before its junction with the Ganges. The bridge at Dehri is said to be the second largest in the world—it is 10,052 feet in length. At Dehri is the anicut from where the water for the Son canal system, on both sides of the river, is led. This is easily the largest canal system in Bihar; there are 209 miles of main canals, 149 of branch canals and 1235 of distributories. At one point a considerable hill torrent is carried under the canal by a syphon aqueduct. There are 180 locks in the Arrah canal.

The canals are of enormous benefit to cultivation. They have converted a large area of infertile land into a richly productive area, and have greatly increased the value of other land; but the high hopes of those who planned the great system have never been realized in their entirety. It was hoped that there would be a big revenue from navigation, but the actual receipts from this source are insignificant. The area to be irrigated was originally expected to be over a million acres, but it has never reached more than 620,000 acres.

The language spoken by the majority of the people of Shahabad is Bhojpuri, named after the old Bhojpur *pargana*. Awadhi is used, as in Gaya, by Muslims and Kaisths. The predominant castes are Ahirs, Brahmans, Rajputs, Koiris and Chamars. Muhammadans are not as numerous as might be expected from their long rule and association with this district. Sasaram town is an important centre of Muhammadans, who number 40 per cent. of the population of the town. Rajputs are more numerous in Shahabad than in any other district of the Province except Saran. They are mainly the descendants of the Rajputs who migrated here from Malwa, and overcame the Cheros. Shahabad has always been a rich ground for recruitment for the army and police force. The Bhojpuris, as Grierson says, are an alert and active people, fond of fighting, opportunists, not afraid to emigrate and strike out into a new career.





*Photo: Archaeological Survey of India*

*The mausoleum of Sher Shah at Sasaram*



Photo: Archaeological Survey of India

*The Rohtas Palace, with elephant gate on right*



*Crossing the Ganges to North Monghyr*



There are strong traditions among several of the aboriginal races which now inhabit Chota Nagpur that their former home was the district of Shahabad, and in particular the southern plateau, with the strong-point of Rohtas. The Oraons say that they were driven out of the district by Hindu armies, and that their final downfall was due to drink—an explanation which bears the stamp of probability. The story is that they were surprised by their enemies during one of their festivals, when most of the men were drunk. There is more evidence about the occupation of the Cheros, who were the ruling race in a great part of the district until they were driven out by the Rajputs migrating from Malwa. At an early stage in the rise of the kingdom of Magadha the district was annexed by that country, but Buddhism never made much headway in Shahabad. This is shown by the fact that although Buddhist remains are so common all over the Patna and Gaya districts, they are extremely rare in Shahabad. Asoka erected a *stupa* and lion pillar in or near Arrah, but these have long since disappeared. At Sasaram there is still an Asokan inscription on the hill of Chandan Pir, but the Mauryan age and the great days of Buddhism have left few other traces in the district. Though Shahabad is poor in monuments of those days, it is, as we shall see, rich in architectural monuments of the Suri dynasty and the Moghuls.

After the downfall of the Gupta dynasty the district again came under the control of aboriginal races, of which the Cheros were the dominant race. Driven from the plains by the incoming Rajputs, they retreated to the hills where they held out for many generations. According to the traditions of the Cheros themselves they conquered Palamau with the help of Rajput Chiefs. Shahabad fell to the invading forces of Mohammad Bakhtiyar Khilji along with the rest of South Bihar.

The career of Sher Shah, whose name is so intimately associated with Shahabad, has already been briefly mentioned in sketching the history of the province. He was one of the Afghan chiefs who suffered defeat at the hands of the emperor Babar on the banks of the Gogra river in

1529, but after Babar's death Sher Shah made himself master of Bengal, and held the strong positions of Rohtas and Chunar on his western flank. The emperor Humayun determined to suppress him, and led an army into Bengal, after capturing the fort of Chunar. But Sher Shah had withdrawn into his almost impregnable position at Rohtas, and from that fortress he sallied forth to intercept Humayun as he withdrew from Bengal. He came up with him at Chausa on the Ganges, West of Buxar, and Humayun was utterly defeated, and had to fly for his life. One more battle a year later near Kanauij completed Humayun's ruin, and Sher Shah was enthroned as emperor in 1542. Sher Shah was a great military leader and an able administrator, but he will be best remembered for the architectural monuments which were erected under his orders, of which the finest is his own mausoleum, built during his life-time at Sasaram.

After the accession of Akbar, his viceroy Man Singh occupied Rohtas as his stronghold. There was constant fighting with the local chieftains, and it was many years before the Rajas of Jagdishpur were overcome and annihilated. The Raja of Bhojpur was finally defeated and executed by Shah Jahan. The turbulent *zamindars* of Bhojpur continued to give trouble, and among other activities their bands of followers were encouraged to waylay and rob travellers passing through the country. In 1740 they were finally overcome, and their castles destroyed. After Mir Kasim's appointment as Nawab he established himself for several months at Sasaram. One of his petty governors was Reinhardt,<sup>1</sup> who afterwards carried out the Patna

<sup>1</sup> Reinhardt's widow, who was known as the Begum Sumroo, had an adventurous career, and lived until 1778. The following anecdote about the Begum and Lord Lake is quoted from *The Good Old Days of the Honourable John Company*, by W. H. Carey (Calcutta, 1907):

"At the age of fifty or thereabouts the Begum Sumroo was a lady of mark; she had money, influence and considerable territories. When Lord Lake was driving Sindhia and the French battalions out of the North-West Provinces, he was anxious to gain over the Begum to the British cause. One day after he had dined in the style which prevailed at the beginning of the century, he was told that the Begum had come to visit him. He rushed out, flushed with wine, forgot all the proprieties, and kissed the Begum on the spot. Horror and dismay set upon the countenances of the Begum's followers. But the Begum pulled the General through. It is, she



massacre. This sort of thing seems to have been a hobby of his, judging from the following passage in the *Sair-ul-Mutakharin*:—

We invited the *banditti* of Bhojpur to an entertainment before the fort of Buxar, and as they all came up while he was exercising a regiment of sepoy, he made them load with ball, and falling at once with fixed bayonets on these miscreants, he put them all to death to the number of 600.

In 1764 the great battle of Buxar was fought between the British forces under Hector Munro, and the armies of Mir Kasim, Shuja-ud-Daula and Shah Alam. After three hours of bloody fighting the troops of Mir Kasim and his allies gave way. It is said that Shuja-ud-Daula, having safely crossed the river east of Buxar by a bridge, had the bridge destroyed, and that this cost the lives of 2,000 of his men, drowned in attempting to cross. Of the far-reaching consequences of the battle of Buxar some account is given in Chapter V.

One of the best-known of the leaders who took arms against the British Government in 1857 was Kuar Singh, a member of the Bhojpur Raj family of land-holders. The following tribute to this leader is taken from a book written by a British civil officer and published by the Government of Bengal—*Early British Administration in Bihar*, by J. R. Hand (1894):—

There was no more popular landlord in Bihar than Kuar Singh, and to this day his memory is cherished by the people with the sincerest regret; while many princely works of public utility remain as memorials of his public spirit and generosity. There never was a case to equal his, in which an enlightened and faithful prince was, by sheer mistrust of the chief executive

said, the salute of a *padre* to his daughter. Lord Lake's kiss was famous for half a century."

There is another story about Begum Sumroo in the same book—a story of a very different type, and reminiscent of Grand Guignol—of the slave girl who offended, the grave dug in the floor of the room, the burial of the girl alive, and the Begum sitting unconcernedly smoking her hookah over the grave.

authority of a province, driven to revolt. Of all the leaders of the mutiny, Kuar Singh was the only one who showed the least ability as a general without resorting to unfair tactics or being guilty of mean treachery or cruelty. True, he twice annihilated troops that were sent after him by entrapping them in ambuscades, but the tactics he employed were perfectly fair in war.

It will also I think be useful to quote another illuminating passage from the same book, which shows up some of the disabilities under which the landholders suffered at a somewhat earlier date—a few years before the Permanent Settlement:—

All *zemindars* (landholders) were liable to sudden confinement in the civil jail and to be dispossessed of their estates for arrears of revenue, without any chance of being released until every farthing was paid up; they were liable to be turned out of their estates for collecting tolls and *abwabs* (levies from tenants for some special purpose, additional to the rent) or owing to the prevalence of crime; any foe could get a sheriff's order to arrest them for a false claim; while dishonest servants fleeced them on the one hand, and the *raiyats* on the other.

The author does not mention the woes of the *raiyats*, but it may be assumed that their troubles, in that time of wars and feuds, and levies to meet their cost, were certainly not less than those of their landlords.



## CHAPTER X

### PLACES OF INTEREST IN SHAHABAD

#### *The Tomb of Sher Shah—Rohtas—Story of Harischandra —Arrah—Buxar*

THE Grand Trunk Road passes through the district from Dehri to the Karamnasa river. The ancient road from Patna to Benares crossed the Son a good deal lower down than the present railway bridge at Dehri on Son, but from Sasaram westwards the road follows with few deviations from its ancient alignment. As in the Hazaribagh district, the old semaphore towers used by the British army before the invention of the telegraph can still be seen on some of the hills. We may begin our account of the places of interest in Shahabad with Sasaram, which stands on this old road and is a convenient centre from which to see the places in the south of the district.

Sasaram can be reached by the Grand Trunk Road or by the road or light railway from Arrah. The town is only two miles from the northern escarpment of the Kaimur plateau. The most ancient monument is the inscription of Asoka in a cave on the hill of Chandan Pir to the east of the town; the *dargah* of the Muslim saint after whom the hill is named is also on the hill. Inside the town is the magnificent mausoleum of Sher Shah. The building stands on a stone platform and terrace thirty feet high, in the middle of a large sheet of water. There was formerly a six-arched bridge from the tomb to the bank, but this collapsed long ago, and a causeway has taken its place. The total height of the building from the water is a hundred and fifty feet, and the span of the great dome is seventy-two feet, or thirteen feet more than the dome of the Taj Mahal—itself one of the world's greatest domes. The windows of the hall are filled with stone tracery, and

there are richly carved passages from the Koran in the Mecca niche. There are still traces of the enamelled tiles which once covered much of the building. The style of architecture is Saracenic, but Hindu influence can be clearly discerned.

In the centre of the town stands the mausoleum of Hasan Khan Sur, father of Sher Shah, a building which was once richly ornamented with stucco work and tiles, but of which only traces are now left. There are a few other old buildings of note in Sasaram, including the Turkish bath, constructed in the reign of Shah Jahan. Travellers along the Grand Trunk road, before the railway was built, often used this bath. It was decorated with fine mosaics made from cornelians taken from the river Son, but no trace of this work has survived.

Twenty miles south-west of Sasaram is the plateau of Shergarh, on which stands a hill fort, now in ruins, built by Sher Shah. The approaches to the fort were strongly fortified. The palace stands on the edge of a precipice and commands a beautiful view over the valley of the Durgauti. The open galleries round the courtyards contain some fine carved pillars and there are some remarkable underground chambers.

From Sasaram a visit may be made to the great fortress of Rohtas. Leaving the Grand Trunk road at Dehri, the road follows the left bank of the Son to Akharpur, where there is an inspection-bungalow. Near here the climb up to the plateau begins. The fort takes its name from prince Rohitaswa. The legend is that king Haris Chandra, whilst out hunting, disturbed the meditations of the hermit Viswamitra, who resolved to punish the intruder. The hermit appeared before the king when he was dispensing charity, and induced him to promise to grant any request that the hermit might make. The hermit then asked for his kingdom and all his worldly possessions. In the end the unfortunate king was forced to sell his wife and son, Rohitaswa, to work for a Brahman, and he himself had to work as a slave for a Dom at the burning ghats at Benares. One of his duties was to collect fees from all who came to burn their dead. One day his wife appeared,



clad only in a ragged cloth, bearing the body of their son, dead from a snake-bite, for the last rites. Haris Chandra forced himself to demand the dues. His wife had nothing in the world except her ragged sari. He insisted on her giving a piece of the cloth as payment. The hermit Viswamitra then appeared. Satisfied with the expiation, he restored Rohitaswa to life, and gave back to Haris Chandra his wife and his kingdom. A moving story. To this day some of the Doms of East Bengal call themselves Haris Chandis. It has been suggested that the story is an allegorical account of the former greatness of the Doms, and their descent to the lowly station which they now occupy.

There were fortifications on this site long before the time of the Muhammadans, but Sher Shah built the fort and the residential buildings which still stand. It is said that he took the fort from the Hindu Raja by a ruse rather like that of the Wooden Horse of Troy, except that the Afghan soldiers who got in were dressed as veiled women, and were carried into the fort on litters.

The fortified plateau is joined to the main hill-range by a narrow neck of land which was strongly fortified, as were all the paths up the steep hillside. When the visitor has scrambled up to the top from Akbarpur he passes through the last of the ruined walls and a masonry archway, after which there is a walk of two miles to the palace. The principal gateway, built by Man Singh, is flanked by carved elephants. Passing through the vaulted guard-room, we reach the hall of audience; there are staircases to the upper rooms, and to the roof crowned with cupolas. Near the centre of the palace is the Aina Mahal, former residence of the chief wife of the Governor—here was Man Singh's Persian garden. The *Takht Padshahi*, or Governor's residence, is a fine four-storied building surmounted by a cupola, with a hall and gallery on the second floor. Among other buildings on the plateau are the Alamgiri mosque and several tombs. On the edge of the precipice, on the north-east of the plateau, is the temple of Rohitaswa, and near it is the shrine sacred to Haris Chandra, a small graceful building.

The valleys and gorges on the sides of the Kaimur hills, and the more remote localities, are still the haunt of many kinds of wild-life. Tigers are now rather rare, but there are still plenty of bears and leopards. A few years ago I heard a story of two young officers who were visiting Rohtas when they were told that a buffalo had been killed by a tiger. They went to the spot and found not one, but two, dead buffaloes, about 50 yards apart, on the edge of the jungle. They had two platforms put up in trees, and each sat up over the carcass of a buffalo waiting for the tiger. One young man had not long to wait. Soon after the sun had set a tiger came out of the jungle and began his meal. For a couple of hours he chewed away. The young man on the *machan* did nothing. At last the tiger (possibly uttering the noise which locally denotes repletion) got up and left. The young man sat on. At dawn, stiff and weary, he got down from his perch, met his friend and related his experiences. 'Why didn't you shoot the blank tiger?' asked his friend. 'I didn't want to spoil your shot,' was the reply, 'I was waiting for the other tiger to come out.'

The Rohtas plateau, with its grand escarpments and its situation overlooking the Son, its forests and wild-life, and its historic monuments, is one of the most attractive places in Bihar. We may hope that one day one of the National Parks of India may be formed here.

Arrah is the headquarters station of the district. It is on the main line of the East Indian Railway, and a light railway runs from here to Sasaram. There are no surviving ancient monuments. A colossal sandstone statue of Vishnu of the Gupta period, ten feet nine inches in height was found at Masarh, near Arrah, in 1882, and is now in the grounds of the Patna museum. The chief building of historical interest is the Arrah House, which was defended by a handful of Europeans and fifty Sikhs during the Mutiny of 1857. Under the command of the Magistrate Mr. Wake, they held out, in a building meant for a billiard-room, for eight days against a force of something like 10,000 men. When the water-supply gave out, the Sikhs



dug a well in the floor. They were relieved in the nick of time.

Buxar, on the Ganges, 45 miles west of Arrah, stands on the high bank of the river. The fort is on the highest point of land, and has a commanding position over the Ganges. The solid high ground on the bank of the river must have been a place of great importance from the earliest times. No ancient buildings survive, but the discovery of many terra-cotta figurines, similar to some of those excavated at Patna and elsewhere and ascribed to the Mauryan epoch, indicate the age of the town. The visitor to the Patna museum can see a number of these interesting terra-cottas, including heads of girls with curious head-dresses and hair-styles. One girl has a pill-box hat on top of her coiffure, tilted towards the front. Such hats have been seen in more recent times.

Thomas Twining, who was later Collector of Shahabad, passed through the district about the year 1795, and found the road from the Son river through Arrah and Buxar to be the 'finest provincial road in India.' (No one could call it that now). It was maintained, according to Twining, by the enterprise of the Collector, who made the landlords pay for its upkeep.

## CHAPTER XI

### SOUTH MONGHYR AND SOUTH BHAGALPUR

#### *History*

'South Bihar' is not an administrative unit, and only three of its six districts are in the Patna Division. The other three are in the Bhagalpur Division, and two of them, Monghyr and Bhagalpur, are cut in two by the Ganges. As already noted, North Bhagalpur has been recently made a separate sub-district—Saharsa. The arrangement whereby districts lie partly south and partly north of the Ganges may seem strange, and indeed the administrative boundaries of this part of Bihar are very awkward; but one must remember that it is actually easier to get to the eastern part of North Bihar from south of the Ganges than from Tirhut, and that the Kosi is a formidable and fluctuating barrier.

In South Monghyr the belt near the Ganges is part of the alluvial plain. In the north-west there is a wide rice-growing plain, with a few isolated hills, and south of this is another great plain, with a mass of hills separating it from the Kiul valley. The Khargpur hills occupy the greater part of the western part of South Monghyr, and south of them, to the border of the district, is undulating country. The town of Monghyr is at the northern tip of the Khargpur hills, where they reach the Ganges, and from that point for sixty miles eastward, there is a peculiar raised belt of limestone about two miles wide along the south bank of the Ganges. The town of Bhagalpur is built on this raised land. South of the belt is a rice-growing plain, but the portion to the west of Bhagalpur is subject to floods and is not very productive. The hilly parts of the two districts are still well-wooded, and harbour



tigers. Leopards and bears are common, even in the more barren hills.

Champa, the capital of the old kingdom of Anga, which comprised most of South Monghyr and South Bhagalpur, was near Bhagalpur town. There is still a village called Champanagar close by. The most probable site of the ancient city is the artificial plateau known as Karanagarh adjoining Champanagar—described in the following chapter. Little is known about this territory or its people—conquered, as we have seen, by Bimbisara, king of Magadha—before the visit of Hieuen Tsiang in the first half of the 7th century A.D. The traveller visited Monghyr—then called Hiranya Parvata, the sacred mountain. He states that a mountain near by was belching great quantities of smoke and steam and mentions the hot springs, which still exist. He also visited the ancient city of Champa, and says: 'the city walls are of brick, and several *chang* in height (perhaps 30 to 40 feet). The ditch round the town is deep and wide, so that the place is exceedingly strong.' At the time of Hieuen Tsiang it appears that a part of the present Monghyr district was a separate kingdom from Bhagalpur. In the 10th century both were under the Pala kings, earnest supporters of Buddhism, and there are many Buddhist remains in this territory, as in Magadha proper. A copper-plate inscription found at Monghyr, and known as the Monghyr plate, is of the period of king Devapala, who reigned towards the end of the 10th century A.D. The inscription mentions a great bridge of boats over the Ganges, which men 'mistake for a range of mountains', and the king's victorious army which was then encamped at Monghyr.

When the Muhammadans first invaded Bihar, the Sena dynasty was in power. They were overcome by Bakhtiyar Khilji, who also occupied Gaur in Bengal. In the centuries which followed Monghyr was a place of great importance, quite over-shadowing Bhagalpur, owing to its commanding position between the hills and the Ganges, and its fortress. In 1397, along with the rest of Bihar, Monghyr and Bhagalpur were annexed to Jaunpur, and about a century later the sovereignty of Delhi was again

established. Monghyr became the headquarters of prince Danyal, son of the king of Bengal, Sultan Shah Hussain. It was this prince who built the tomb in the fort of over the remains of Shah Nafa, to which mention is made in the following chapter. When Baber's son Humayun was retreating from Bengal he was defeated in a battle near Monghyr by Sher Shah.

In 1580 Monghyr was the headquarters of Raja Todar Mull, Akbar's finance minister and general, in his campaign against the Bengal rebels, who were encamped at Bhagalpur. Todar Mull adopted what would nowadays be called a 'denial policy' (in preference to the more brutal expression 'scorched earth'). He starved the rebels into dispersal and defeat, by taking effective steps to ensure that they could get no food or other supplies. Shah Shuja, second son of Shah Jahan and governor of Bengal, took refuge here on two occasions and strengthened the fortifications, but his position was turned by Muhammad, son of Aurangzeb, and Mir Jumla, and he was forced to abandon Monghyr and retire to Rajmahal.

The last of the Muhammadan rulers and administrators to make Monghyr his headquarters was Nawab Kasim Ali Khan, who in 1761 moved his capital to this place from Murshidabad. Whilst at Monghyr he dispensed justice, according to the old tradition, in public, on two days in the week. He gained a reputation for fairness and equality of treatment to rich and poor. The oppressed *raiyats* in particular learned to expect justice at his hands.

The last fight on the battlements of Monghyr took place in 1763, when a British army, advancing after their victory at Udhua Nala, carried out a two days' bombardment to affect a breach in the walls of the fort, in preparation for the assault. The breach was made, and the assault was about to be launched when the governor of the fort, who had been appointed by Mir Kasim, surrendered it. The news of the surrender infuriated the Nawab—always a man of violent and dangerous temper—and it was then that he ordered the massacre of the prisoners at Patna.



These are the high-lights in the long and turbulent history of this part of the province after the time of the first Muhammadan conquests, in which the fort of Monghyr played so conspicuous a part. In the time of Lord Clive the fort was the scene of the mutiny of British officers, in protest at the cutting of their field-allowance (*bhatta*). Clive himself hurried up to Monghyr in 1766 to restore discipline.

## CHAPTER XII

### PLACES OF INTEREST IN SOUTH MONGHYR AND BHAGALPUR

*Monghyr Fort—Khargpur—Bamda Mission—Bhagalpur—  
Cleveland Memorial—Mandar Hill*

MOST of the stone-faced ramparts of the great fort of Monghyr still stand, and the deep and swift current of the Ganges still washes the buttresses and bastions above the river. Many of the government offices and those of the local bodies are inside the fort area, as well as the residences of most of the officials and others. There are fine water reservoirs dug deep into the soil, two of which are connected with the Ganges. In the angling season these ' tanks ' are surrounded by anglers who have paid their fees and look for profit as well as sport. Great *rohu* and other fish are caught. Tackle is not always strong enough to hold these monsters of the tribe, but the local anglers are equal to the emergency. I was walking round one of the tanks one evening when a fisherman hooked a whopper. The fish rushed towards the middle of the tank, and all the line had soon run out. The angler immediately threw his rod after the fish and tore off most of his clothes. He then dived in and set off in pursuit of his rod, which was still careering across the water. In due course the fish was worn out, and the proud captor swam ashore towing rod, line and fish behind him.

The rocky hill known as Karnachaura is probably the oldest site in the fort. The large building on its summit was built by General Goddard towards the end of the 18th century, and was the residence of the officer commanding the fort. It is now the property of the Murshidabad Raj. There are signs of ancient Hindu buildings on the hill; I noticed there carved stone blocks partly exposed above



the surface, which had evidently belonged to an ancient temple. Similar fragments of ancient temples, and some sculptured friezes, are imbedded in the walls of the fort. The visitor will notice, beside the *chabutra* (platform) in front of the house, a very old tree, a baobab.

There is another eminence inside the fort, on which the Collector's residence now stands. A massive old building of Moghul times was demolished here about thirty years ago to make room for the new residence. Nothing but explosives were of any use in destroying the thick and solid walls. In an old well in the compound were the entrances to two underground passages, and similar passages led from a well in a building inside the jail. Part of the jail consists of buildings of the palace of Shah Shuja, and includes the old powder magazine. There are well laid-out public gardens alongside the largest of the lakes in the fort area, and the Lee gardens embellish the corner where the battlements overhang the river (known to old residents of Monghyr as 'Scandal Point').

The oldest structure in the fort is (or was) the shrine of a Muslim saint near the southern gate, known as the *dargah* of Shah Nafah. This was one of the many ancient buildings destroyed or damaged in the earthquake. It has been rebuilt in a somewhat tasteless manner. On the west of the fort near the river is the tomb of the poet Ashraf (Mulla Muhammad Saiyad) who died here in 1704. One casualty of the 1934 earthquake which is not a matter for regret was the red-brick tower on an arch shaped like a horse-shoe, which Mr. Herschell Dear erected over the eastern gate some fifty years ago, and which fortunately fell down.

There is no building of special interest in the town outside the fort area. Three miles to the east is the hill called Pirpahar, on the top of which is a house erected by Ghurgiz Khan, the Armenian general of Nawab Kasim Ali Khan, and used for many years as the residence of the collector of Monghyr. The well-known hot springs of Monghyr are situated at Sitakund, four miles to the east of the town. The water of these springs formerly had a great reputation, especially among Europeans, and large quantities were

sent down to Calcutta. Before setting out on the long voyage to England people used to provide themselves with a large bottled supply of this drinking water, which kept pure and drinkable for many months. Six miles south of Sitakund is the Rishikesh spring in a picturesque little valley. Monghyr used to be famous for cabinet-making, and also for its iron-work.<sup>1</sup> At one time Monghyr-made guns were very well-known, and guns, including double-barrelled breech-loading guns, are still made by the craftsmen of Monghyr. There are also flourishing local industries for the manufacture of steel trunks and small implements, and some of the local gold and silversmiths have a very good reputation.

The town of Jamalpur is important as the headquarters of the mechanical department of the East Indian Railway. The workshops employ about 12,000 people, and include iron foundries, and a steel-works and rolling mill. Another important industry is the tobacco factory of the Imperial Tobacco Company at Basdeopur on the outskirts of Monghyr.

Bamda, in the south of the district, a few miles from Chakai, is famous for the Mission under Dr. Macphail (Mission of the United Free Church of Scotland to the Santals). The Rev. J. M. Macphail began work here in 1890 and worked for many years. In his surgical work he specialised in eye operations, particularly cataract, and several thousand operations are performed every year. Mr. R. M. Macphail carried on the work of his father. No wonder that their name is a household word among the people of this locality.

Many ancient sites, Buddhist, Hindu and Muslim are to be found in the district of Monghyr. One place of special interest is Khargpur, on the road from Monghyr to Jamui. This road, which continues on to Nawada, where it joins the main roads to Gaya, Patna and Ranchi, is now an all-weather road, and bridged throughout. The gold and

<sup>1</sup> Bishop Heber noted in his diary (1827) 'The shops are numerous, and I was surprised at the neatness of the kettles, tea-trays, guns, pistols, toasting-forks, cutlery and other things of the sort, which may be procured in this tiny Birmingham'.





*Photo: Archaeological Survey of India*

*A hall of old Rajmahal, still standing on the high bank of the Ganges*

*Detail of  
the pillars*



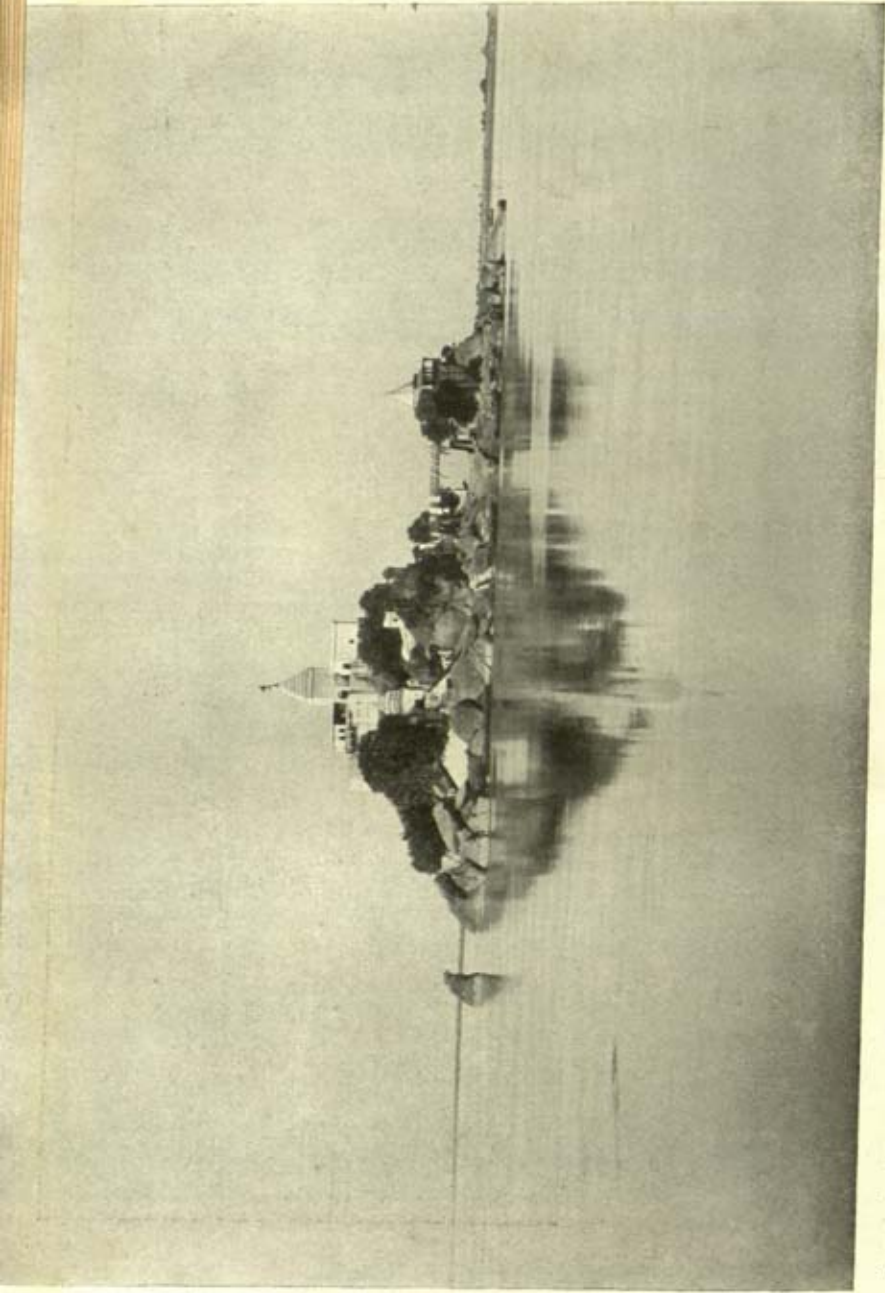


Photo: Archaeological Survey of India

*The temple rock in the Ganges near Sultanpur*



silver-smiths of Khargpur were well-known, and it was particularly famous for the flexible gold and silver fish which were made here. (I fear that this interesting local industry has died out). There are several stories about the chieftains of Khargpur and their final overthrow by Moghul forces,—the chiefs retained semi-independence for 300 years after the first Muhammadan invasions. Three miles west of the town there is a waterfall in the hills which bears the graceful name of the Five Princesses (*Panch Kumari*). The local legend is that these were the five daughters of the Raja of Khargpur who took refuge in the hills when their father was taken prisoner to Delhi, and that to escape their pursuers they jumped from the precipice to their death. A mile below the waterfall is a most picturesque lake, formed by a dam which was constructed about fifty years ago. One visitor has declared that it rivals the lakes of Killarney.

In Bhagalpur district, south of the Ganges, the most interesting historical sites are the Karangarh plateau, already mentioned as the probable site of the capital of the ancient kingdom of Anga, the Barari caves by the river near Bhagalpur, the rock-hewn temple in the river at Colgong, the islet of Jahangira near Sultanganj, and Mandar hill. The Karangarh site, a few miles west of Bhagalpur, is now a square raised plateau, with sides about half a mile long, and surrounded by a wide ditch or moat. Buchanan-Hamilton says that its ramparts are 'without walls', but remains of the ancient brick facing of the rampart can be seen at several points. The whole of the space enclosed by the ramparts is now filled in and levelled by the accumulations of ages and the hand of man. It is now used for police lines and a training ground. It was no doubt occupied by the Muhammadans, and there is at least one Muhammadan tomb on the ramparts. On the plateau were the barracks of the corps of Hill Rangers raised by Cleveland among the turbulent Paharias of the Santal Parganas.

The action of streams running off the plateau and the making of pathways have cut deep channels through the old ramparts, and these reveal the signs of prolonged occupation. A few years ago, when I was stationed in Bhagal-

MODE OF DOMINION  
THE GOVERNOR GENERAL AND COUNCIL OF BENGAL,  
IN HONOUR OF HIS CHARACTER AND FOR AN  
EXAMPLE TO OTHERS,  
HAVE ORDERED THIS MONUMENT TO BE ERECTED.  
HE DEPARTED THIS LIFE ON THE 13TH OF  
JANUARY 1784, AGED 29.

Cleveland's house is known as Tila Kothi, and is situated about half way between Bhagalpur and Karangarh. It is now in the possession of a branch of the Tagore family. Fairly extensive changes appear to have been made recently in this historic building. It is possible that it was in this house that Lady Hastings stayed when her husband was absent in Oudh. Another monument to Cleveland—that erected by the landholders of the district—is in the shape of a Hindu temple, and can be seen near the Circuit House in Bhagalpur (not, as the Gazetteer erroneously states, at Karangarh).

Just about a hundred years ago Dr. (afterwards Sir Joseph) Hooker, the famous Botanist, visited Bhagalpur, and in his book 'Himalayan Journals' he has given a description of the Bhagalpur Botanical Gardens, which, he says, were a model of their kind, employing about 50 men, and supplying large quantities of seeds of cereals, garden vegetables and other plants to the public. There were many timber trees as well as fruit trees, including fruit trees from Afghanistan, oranges etc. Grapes were being grown, and were doing very well, on a trellis forming a long covered walk. The Rev. R. S. Chalk, Principal of the C. M. S. High School, in a very interesting letter, informed me that the Gardens were just in front of Cleveland House. Mr. Chalk says 'These Public Gardens are now used—as a last degradation—as the municipal refuse tip. The trees referred to (i.e., the trees mentioned by Hooker) were cut down only this last year. Till a few years ago the remains of what was clearly the 'grape-walk' could be seen in the centre. The iron frame-work was only removed (or probably looted) during the last war. I doubt if any trace now remains.'

Five miles out of Bhagalpur town is situated the Sabour Agricultural College, opened in 1908, where much valuable research work has been, and is being, done.



Mandar hill is a granite hill 700 feet high, thirty miles south of Bhagalpur. It plays an important part in Hindu mythology, and is a place of great sanctity. For this is the scene of the mythological story related in the Puranas, of the struggle between Vishnu and the monster, and the eventual destruction of the monster and the piling of Mandar hill over its headless body. This was also the hill used by the gods in churning the ocean, as related in the Mahabharata. Near the summit are the ruins of ancient temples, and many tanks have been cut in the side of the hill. Pilgrims still see with awe the snake carved in the rock and encircling the hill. Round the base are the remains of a large city with many tanks, and among the ruins is a stone triumphal arch with a Sanskrit inscription of 1597 A.D. On the occasion of the festival of Pous Sankranti as many as 40,000 pilgrims come to bathe in the large tank at the foot of the hill.

Nearly all books of travel written in the days when the Ganges was the highway from Bengal to upper India mention the granite rocks of Jahangira, near Sultanganj, between Bhagalpur and Monghyr on the south bank of the river. There are two rocks, the larger of which projects into the river and is completely cut off from the bank when the river is high, for the current at this point is swift and dangerous. On this hill is a temple of Ghaibnath Siva. This is a place of great sanctity and is a specially holy place for Hindus to bathe. The cliffs at this point are the traditional scene of the adventures of the god Siva and the river nymph. The other rock is on the river bank, and is crowned by a mosque. At Sultanganj there are many remains of Buddhist buildings, and many carved images have been found; the finest is a colossal statue of fine workmanship, dating from the time of Chandragupta II, now in the Birmingham Museum.

There is another ancient rock-temple on the Ganges, at Colgong, east of Bhagalpur, and here also statues have been found from time to time. At this point, as at Sultanganj, the Ganges takes a bend to the north, and all such places are especially sacred to Hindus. On the Patharghata hill (the 'Patter Gotta' of bishop Herber), also east

of Bhagalpur on the Ganges, there are rock-sculptures locally known as the eighty-four sages, and ascribed to the 7th century A.D. or earlier. This hill also contains a number of caves.



## CHAPTER XIII

### THE SANTAL PARGANAS

*History—Rajmahal—Problem Of The Paharias—Cleveland—Creation Of The Damin-i-Koh—Arrival Of The Santals—The Santal Rebellion—Changes In The Law and Administration—The Settlement*

THE district of the Santal Parganas is for several reasons one of the most interesting in the Province. It is inhabited largely by an aboriginal population, yet the majority of these aboriginals are comparatively recent immigrants into the district. A considerable part of the district is a government estate; that is to say, an estate in which there is no intermediary between the State and the tenantry, and it has its own special tenancy and revenue laws and its own system of administration. Parts of the district have played an important part in history from early times; it once contained, in Rajmahal, the capital of Bengal; and it has, at Deoghar, one of the most sacred places of pilgrimage for Hindus in India.

The district is an upland tract with a mountainous backbone. The principal range is that of the Rajmahal hills, which project northwards into the Gangetic valley and force the Ganges to swing to the east before turning southwards towards the sea. This geographical feature is the reason for the importance of the northern strip of the Santal Parganas in the pages of history, for there was only a narrow passage between the hills and the river, and armies marching to and from Bengal had to follow this route. Thus it was that the narrowest point, the Teliagarhi pass, a naturally strong position still further strengthened by fortifications, was for long known as the Key of Bengal.

There are no lofty peaks in the Rajmahal hills, the highest being about 2,000 feet. But for all that, some of

the scenery in these hills is very fine, especially perhaps in the forests of the ' Old Reserve ' in the hills thirty miles 'north-east of Dumka, and in the northern hills, where one can look over the rolling hills and their steep sides above the Ganges valley to the many-channelled river and the vast plain; and far to the north, if you are lucky and air conditions are right, you may see the snows of the Himalayas, seeming to hang, faint and far, above the horizon.

The earliest inhabitants of the district of whom anything is known were the Maler (or Sauria) Paharias, the hill people who still inhabit the North Rajmahal hills. Throughout the early period of Indian history, and right through the period of Muhammadan rule, the greater part of the district was a mass of dense forests, the haunt of numerous wild beasts, including tigers, wild elephants, and even rhinoceros. This does not apply to the flat and open fringes of the district, where the land was no doubt brought under the plough at an early stage in history. In the time of the Muhammadan rulers many battles were fought along the narrow strip of land between the hills and the river. It was here that Shah Jahan, during his rebellion against his father Jahangir, defeated and killed Ibrahim Khan, the Viceroy of Bengal.

In 1592 Rajmahal was made the seat of the government of Bengal, under Man Singh, Akbar's Viceroy, but ten years later Nawab Islam Khan moved his headquarters to Dacca. The city had one other brief period of greatness, when it again became the capital from 1639 to 1660. In the days of its prosperity Rajmahal must have been a spacious town with many fine buildings. The ruins of the old city stretch for four miles to the west of the present town. Some fine mosques survive, of which the most notable are the Juma Masjid near the Taljhari road, four miles from the railway station, and the Akbar Sahi mosque in the town. The marble hall near the river is the most graceful of the surviving buildings; it is looked after by the archaeological department. But most of the other great buildings of old Rajmahal, the palaces of the noblemen, the tombs of the great, have fallen into decay, or have collapsed into the changing river; or (ignominious fate) were destroyed







*The line of the Himalayan snows  
was taken in Nepal these snows are*

*north of Tirhut. Although this photograph  
visible from many points in North Bihar*





by the railway company to provide ballast for the railway line.

In an old book called 'Excursions in India' Captain Thomas Skinner gives a description of the ruins as they were when he visited them in 1826. His boat anchored close to the ruins of the palace, and he describes the white marble room, inlaid with Arabic characters in black. On the return journey he wandered through the 'ruined halls and desolate quadrangles' and was overtaken by darkness. The ruins must have been very much more extensive in those days. Skinner remarks that 'marble seems to have been lavished in great profusion upon all the chambers. Where the roof had disappeared, and exposed the courts to the air, it was a complete wilderness, and as the rooms would afford admirable shelter to robbers, so might the courts to tigers and snakes'.

About five miles south of Rajmahal is Udhua Nala, where a battle was fought in 1763 between the British, under Major Adams, and the forces of Mir Kasim. Mir Kasim's army held a strong fortified position stretching across the defile between the hill and the Ganges. Major Rennell, who made the maps of Bengal for the East India Company towards the end of the 18th century, gives a drawing of the position. It shows a long wall and ditch with 12 towers or bastions. The right of the position rests on a hill surmounted by a fort, and the left on the river, and through the centre runs the high road to Bengal. The hill on the right was taken by Adams by a night attack, the attacking forces first crossing a swamp with their weapons and powder held above their heads. The troops holding the hill were taken by surprise, and in the confusion the main force stormed a breach in the wall with the aid of scaling-ladders. The defeat of Mir Kasim's forces was overwhelming, and the survivors made no attempt to make a stand between the battlefield and the fortress of Monghyr.

The greatest problem which confronted the British in the early days of their rule in the Santal Parganas was that of the Paharias, who had become, in the troubled years of the decline of Muslim power, a race of bandits and dacoits,



levying a heavy toll on travellers and merchants, and on the fertile plains below the hills. The pacification of the Paharias, and their conversion into a comparatively law-abiding people, was a very creditable achievement. The three men who were mainly responsible for it were Captains Brooke and Browne, and Mr. Augustus Cleveland, and of these the latter is most famous. Reference has already been made to the epitaph on the pillar at Bhagalpur, and to the fact that Cleveland's memory is still green among the Paharias. He went about unarmed in the hills and villages of this people, so recently feared as a race of savages. He started schools, and established many bazars below the hills and encouraged the people to bring their produce there for sale and barter. At Cleveland's suggestion the Government agreed that a number of chiefs and deputy chiefs of the Paharias be paid stipends in return for carrying out police duties. The hill people were also removed from the jurisdiction of the ordinary courts, and cases in which hillmen were concerned were tried by a council of chiefs presided over by Cleveland himself. He also removed the hill country and the belt of forest at its base (the Damin-i-koh) from the control of the zemindars. The corps of Bhagalpur Hill Rangers, which Cleveland created, consisted of Paharias, and was during his life-time and for some years afterwards a fine and disciplined body of men. But 'personal rule' has one great defect, that it depends for its efficiency on the personality of the officer. Cleveland was succeeded by mediocre men, and his system began to disintegrate.

In 1823 the government declared the hilly tract and the Damin-i-koh to be a government estate. (The whole area is now known as the Damin). Steps were taken to demarcate it. In 1837 Mr. Pontet was appointed Superintendent of the estate, with instructions to encourage and assist the immigration of the Santals, who had started to come into the district in large numbers. It appears that the Santals had first begun to settle in the district about the year 1790, having been encouraged to come in from neighbouring districts to clear the forest and to get rid of some of the wild beasts which were very common. There was little oppo-

siton from the Paharias to the immigration of Santals into the heart of their country. The Paharias had indeed never bothered to bring the fertile valleys under cultivation, their method of cultivation being the 'kurao' or 'Jhuming' system, under which a patch of forest on a hillside is cut and burnt down, and seeds are dibbled into the soil and ashes; after a year or two the patch is left and the same process is carried out in another plot. The method did not do much harm as long as there were vast forests and few people; but with the shrinking of the forest and the rapid growth of the immigrant Santal population it became very harmful. Frequent 'Jhuming' of hillsides resulted in destruction of forests and erosion. The rights of the Paharias to follow this method of cultivation are now confined to certain demarcated areas, about 100,000 acres in all.

The process of converting the forest and wilderness into cultivated land went on very rapidly, and by the middle of the 19th century most of the valleys, which a generation before had been masses of dense jungle, the haunt of tigers and wild elephants, had been brought by the industrious Santals under the plough. But various evils were springing up in this rapidly growing community. The Santals, like other aborigines, are thriftless people. They were as clay in the hands of the money-lenders and dishonest *amlas* (subordinate officials), who were reaping harvests in the Damin. To seek redress, a Santal who believed that he had been cheated had to go to the court at Deogarh or Bhagalpur. Even when he had made this long journey he often failed to get justice. For the *mahajan* (money-lender) had all his accounts fully written up, and the Santal had only a knotted string or other device to show the year when he took the loan and the payments made. Higher officials rarely visited the Damin. The superintendent had no authority to deal with civil or criminal cases. A pernicious system which prevailed in many parts of the district was the 'Kamiauti' system, under which a man borrowing money had to work for the lender until the debt was discharged or deemed to be discharged. In the hands of unscrupulous lenders this became little better than slavery, and the debtor often found it impossible to escape from the



toils. (A reference is made to this system in the chapter on Palamau; I regret to say that the system is by no means extinct in that and other districts.) Many *Dikkus* (non-aboriginals) had settled in the tracts cleared by the Santals, and the *Dikkus* were in many places obtaining possession of the best rice lands by means of mortgage deeds and other methods.

These were the suppressed grievances which burst forth in 1855 in the *Hul*, the great Santal rebellion. An additional motive at once made itself felt, in the words of the author of the *Gazetteer*, their 'yearning for independence and for recognition as lords of the soil'. The leaders of the revolt were landless men—who had long been brooding over their wrongs. They gave out that they had been visited by a divine apparition which gave a message to the Santals. A branch of the *sal*-tree was sent throughout the Damin, as a signal for the people to assemble. A great number of Santals assembled at Bhagnadihi, near Burhait, the home of the leaders. Soon after that attacks on *Dikkus* began, and the conduct of the insurgent Santals was often marked by inhuman cruelty, from which women and children were not spared. When a money-lender fell into their hands their outrages were marked by a grim humour. For they would cut off a limb with the remark that 4 annas of the debt was paid, another limb saying that 8 annas was paid—until they cut off the unfortunate man's head to complete the 16 annas. The Santals fought with reckless courage, armed only with their spears and bows and arrows, against disciplined troops armed with fire-arms. The end was inevitable. Their armies were hunted down and dispersed, and their leaders were killed or captured. By the end of February 1856 the rebellion was at an end and peace had been restored to the district. The Paharias had taken no active part in the struggle, but they had given way to their propensity for loot, and followed at a respectful distance behind the Santal bands, seizing the opportunities for loot which often offered themselves.

This grave rising was followed by a government enquiry into the whole system of administration of the district, and

as a result of this enquiry it was decided to set up a special type of administration suited to the needs of 'the uncivilised race of people called Santals'. The whole area in which the aboriginals predominated was excluded from the operation of the ordinary laws, and was divided into 4 sub-districts—Deoghar with Jamtara, Dumka, Godda, and Rajmahal with Pakaur—the whole being named the Santal Parganas. Considerable police powers were entrusted to the village headmen, and to the heads of groups of villages, called *parganais*. The Deputy Commissioner and 4 assistant commissioners were given jurisdiction to hear civil and criminal cases.

During the troubled times of 1857 the Santals remained peaceful. But a few years later discontent again made itself felt. One of the salutary rules introduced by Sir George Yule in 1856 was one which limited the amount of interest which could be decreed against an aboriginal to 25% of the original debt. This was rendered inoperative by the passing of the Civil Procedure Code in 1859. The Rules introduced by Yule also proved to be ineffective in preventing rackrenting, wrongful removal of headmen and other abuses. There was a scare of another Santal rising, followed by another government enquiry, which resulted in the enactment of Regulation III of 1873—the 'Santal Parganas Bible'—for the 'peace and good government of the district'. This regulation, and wise administration by picked officers have resulted in peace in the district in our time, disturbed only by occasional unrest and disturbances, the root of which is nearly always economic.

The district is fortunate in one respect—that the decisions of the Settlement courts are final, the Settlement record being final and conclusive evidence of the correctness of the entries. It should be explained that the Settlement record in other districts is only presumptive evidence of title, and that the periodical settlements leave a lamentable crop of litigation behind them. In the Santal Parganas on the other hand the settlement puts a stop to litigation. In fact the people save up their disputes about land, etc., for the next settlement.



## CHAPTER XIV

### THE SANTALS AND THE PAHARIAS

*Santal Customs—the Sauria Paharias—Sabai Grass—  
Paharia Customs—The Mal Paharias.*

THE Santals are the most numerous of the tribes of the Austro-Asiatic race, to which the Mundas, Hos and some other tribes also belong. Santals in Bihar province alone number well over one and a half millions, of whom nearly 800,000 live in the Santal Pargans.

A brief discussion of the original habitat and mass migrations of this people may be found in the chapter on the aboriginals of Chota Nagpur. As we have already seen, the Santals first began to move into the hills and forests of the Santal Pargans towards the end of the 18th century, but long before that they had been established in the districts of Hazaribagh, Singhbhum, Manbhum and Midnapore. The Santals rapidly spread over the whole of the hilly parts of the district, destroying the forest and bringing all suitable land under the plough. A common practice was for the headman of a Santal village community to obtain from a landlord permission to clear a particular tract of forest-country, the headman agreeing to pay a fixed sum irrespective of the area of land which would ultimately be found fit for cultivation. The annual sum payable was trifling at first, and gradually increased as the work of reclamation progressed, until the whole agreed sum became payable. The headman collected from each cultivator his share of the sum payable to the landlord. It happened only too often that the landlord after a few years began to demand a much higher sum as rent and to harass the villagers in other ways. Usually the villagers would then abandon the lands cleared and embanked with so much labour, and move to

some fresh tract of virgin jungle where the same process would be repeated.

With the disappearance of the forests and the growing population there was no longer any scope for this process, and the smouldering discontent broke out into the agrarian troubles which were all too common during the 19th century in the districts inhabited by the aborigines. It was pointed out by Sir Edward Gait in 1901 that the Santals in their migrations kept to rolling upland country with laterite soil. They have overrun not only the Santal Parganas and many parts of Chota Nagpur, but the laterite tracts of Malda, Dinajpur, Rajshahi and Bogra. But they can no longer pick and choose, and many Santals have settled in the alluvial plain of North Bihar, where they have exercised their talent for reclamation under different conditions,—in the land devastated and abandoned by the Kosi river.

The religion and customs of the Santals naturally resemble those of their brethren the Mundas and Hos, about whom some account is given in the Part dealing with Chota Nagpur. The Santals, like the rest of the aborigines, are a cheerful people, fond of outdoor sports, especially hunting, and of dancing. Most of the men drink too much—this is, in fact, their chief failing. The author of the *Gazetteer* mentions the story of the old Santal and the missionary. 'Will the Christian God allow old people to get drunk twice a week?' he asked. 'Certainly not' was the reply. 'Then teach our boys and girls' said the old man 'but leave us alone'.

The Santals are divided into a number of septs, each of which has a several sub-septs. Marriage within a man's father's sept or sub-sept is forbidden; but a man may marry into his mother's sept, though not into her particular sub-sept. Like the Mundas and Hos, the Santals have their village headmen and the heads of groups of villages, known as *parganaitis*. The latter have important police duties, and decide, with the aid of the *Panchayat* or committee of headmen, petty disputes which come before them. They are also responsible for the collection of the village rents from the headmen and for due payment to the government. Formerly there were no regular police in the



Damin, but the tendency has been of recent years to introduce a measure of police control, while not depriving the *parganait*s of too much of their authority. The headmen have also important responsibilities, which are set out in the official document of appointment. One of his duties is to report any cases of crime which occur in the village. A feature of the Santal tribal law is that the people themselves are the final authority in important matters. On the occasion of the great tribal hunts, the master of the ceremonies is not one of the village officials or a *parganait*, but an ordinary villager. In the evenings, after the hunt is over for the day, the assemblage may deal with complaints against headmen or *parganait*s, as well as any grievance or matter of tribal importance which may be brought forward.

One of the matters which may be dealt with at these assemblies of the people is outcasting. The ceremony is known as *bitlaha*, and has not often been witnessed by non-aboriginals. The usual reasons for outcasting are misconduct between a man and woman of prohibited sept-relationship, or between a Santal and a non-Santal. If a village headman hears of such an offence he consults the headmen of neighbouring villages. If they think that the charge is true, the fellow villagers of the guilty people are warned not to eat or drink with them. The matter comes up at the tribal hunt, and if it is decided by the people that the charge is proved, the ceremony is carried out. The men assemble in the early hours of the morning outside the village where the offender lives and sing obscene songs and dance obscenely, while a tremendous drumming is kept up. The performance ends up with the smashing of the offender's pots and pans and the defiling of the house in a filthy manner. The parents of the offenders share the penalty of outcasting, and anyone who receives an outcasted person into his house may also be outcasted. No Santal may eat with an outcasted person, or marry his children. There were recently some cases of *Bitlaha* in the Godda subdivision which gave a good deal of trouble to the authorities and which seem to have been cases of misuse or abuse of the ceremony.

The Santals observe a number of festivals throughout the year, and they are all occasions for dancing and drinking. The principal festival is the *Sohrae*, which takes place after the rice crop has been harvested. This festival has its counterpart among many tribes and peoples. Drinking, dancing and revelry go on for several days and there is a great deal of sexual license—in fact it is an occasion when men and women seem to throw off all restraint. Formerly it was the practice to observe the festival on different dates in different villages, but the authorities have endeavoured to put some limit to the revelry and license by an order declaring that the festival must be on the same date everywhere.

There are 2 branches of the Paharias. The Mal Paharias, who live in the Southern hills of the Damin and in the hilly country in the South and East of the district, are largely Hinduised. The race which lives in the northern Rajmahal hills is known as the Maler or Sauria Paharias, and they are much the more interesting branch of the people. We will use the name Sauria, as the other name is too much like the name of the Southern Paharias. As the Gazetteer somewhat obscurely states 'the word *Maler* is generally written *Maler*, but it is written *Maler* both by Mr. Oldham and the Rev. Droese, and that spelling (*Maler*) will therefore be adopted'.

The language of the Sauria Paharias is closely related to that of the Oraons, and there is a tradition among the Oraons that when they were driven out of their homes along the Son river one branch of the race moved into Palamau and later into the Ranchi district, while another and smaller branch moved down the valley of the Ganges until they reached the Rajmahal hills, where they settled. We have seen something of the bad reputation of these people in the days of Muhammadan rule and in the early years of British supremacy, and of the successful efforts of Cleveland and others to reform them. But it is to be feared that they are still not averse from crime, and that there are still *dacoits* among them. It is easy for them, knowing as they do every path and hiding place on the hills, to disappear after committing a crime. They have their head-



men and chiefs of groups of villages, who still receive small stipends from government. The chiefs and their assistants (*sardars* and *naibs*) have the duty of reporting crime and vital statistics.

The method of cultivation practised by the Paharias is still the *Kurao* system described earlier. The Paharias are far from industrious, and prefer any occupation to that of solid or continuous work. They are fond of hunting and fishing. Nowadays the mainstay of the Sauria Paharias is *sabai* grass. This is a grass which grows freely on the slopes of the Northern hills and is valuable for paper-making. The fields, or rather divisions of the hill slopes on which the grass is grown, belong to the Paharias, who pay a very small rent to the government for them. The slopes have to be cleared in preparation for the crop, seed is sown in the rains, and weeding is essential to prevent the return of jungle growth. At one time the *mahajans* had complete control of the industry and of the fields, and almost of the Paharias themselves; for the Paharias had nearly all become hopelessly indebted to them. The government intervened and in 1909 took control of the *sabai* cultivation themselves. This experiment proved a failure, and in 1913 the Paharias were replaced in control of their *sabai* fields, with a measure of government control and a set of restrictions to safeguard them from their own folly. The results were soon apparent. The Paharias neglected the vital business of weeding, and the output fell rapidly. The government tried various systems to maintain and increase the output while safeguarding the interests of the Paharias. The system ultimately worked out gave the *mahajans* authority to see that weeding was carried out, and gave some security to the paper mill which took the bulk of the crop as well as to the Paharias themselves. There is no doubt that this *sabai* grass business is one after the Paharia's own heart. It is the ideal job. The Paharia need not do anything, unless he feels really energetic, except sit down and receive the money.

The Paharias, like the Oraons and several other aboriginal tribes, have the custom of separate dormitories for the boys and girls of the village. A Paharia may marry 5 or

6 wives, and it is a quaint but prevalent custom for the husband to sleep in the middle with all the wives around him. If the first, or chief, wife agrees, a Paharia may marry all her sisters. They are not a numerous race, and they have not the vitality or fertility of their kinsmen, the Oraons. The total number of the Saurias in the census of 1941 was 58,654. Mr. R. B. Bainbridge, in his account of the Sauria Paharias, (*Memoirs of the Royal Asiatic Society of Bengal*, Vol. II, No. 4), gives a very interesting description of certain of their customs. *Pujas* are common, and at some of them homage is offered to models of railway trains, elephants, tigers or leopards. Railway trains are among the things which are believed to bring illness, like small-pox or cholera, to the village. In one of the religious ceremonies a procedure is followed which seems rather unfair to the chief actor in the *séance*. The village sorcerer is carried round the house when a person is ill, sitting astride on *sal* poles. The sorcerer is supposed to go into a trance, the spirit of a dead sorcerer having entered into him. But to make sure that he is really "out" the villagers cover him with red ants, creatures whose bite is decidedly unpleasant.

The Mal Paharias, the Hinduised section of the tribe, have given up their ancestral language, and speak a form of Bengali. They still stick to the hills, and are concentrated in the Southern part of the central hills and in the hilly areas in the south and west of the district. Like the Saurias, they still practise *jhuming* (the method of cultivation described in Chapter XIV) in parts of Pahaur and South Godda, but in general their methods of cultivation are much more advanced than those of the Saurias, and they have taken to the use of the plough. They number about 50,000.

It was thought for many years that the Paharias were a dying race. But fortunately this now seems to be incorrect, and they are holding their own in the struggle for existence.<sup>1</sup> Perhaps it is some deep instinct for self-pre-

1. I am afraid that a headache awaits anyone who may be thinking of studying the census figures of the Paharias. According to those figures the number of Mal Paharia women fell, between 1931 and 1941, by nine per cent, while the number of men shot up by twenty-five per cent. Possibly the husbands grew suspicious of the enumerators snooping around.



servation which has made them hold on with such remarkable tenacity, perhaps for thousands of years, to their beloved hill-tops. In the past those hill-tops were a haven of refuge. Now attachment to them is in the Paharia's blood and he is unhappy away from them. On those hills they live isolated from the rest of mankind, looking down on to the busy plains, the railway lines and the great river, or across the hill ranges and deep valleys of the Damin; surrounded by forests and rocky escarpments; secure from intrusion or molestation. Those who have visited their hill-tops can understand their deep attachment to their lofty homes, which have been their stronghold since before the dawn of history.

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and ordered the ladies to keep out of the way. The Saurias seem to have been less suspicious of the motives of the strangers, or perhaps the husbands are able to exert less authority; for the number of women shows a small increase, while the men decreased by five per cent.

## CHAPTER XV

### PLACES OF INTEREST IN THE SANTAL PARGANAS

*Deoghar—Dumka—Rajmahal—Sakrigali and Teliagarhi—  
Motijharna Falls—Forests and Wild Life—a Leopard Story.*

THE holy city of Deoghār is a few miles east of the main line of the East Indian Railway at Jasidih.

It was here that, according to the *Siva Purana*, the demon king of Ceylon, Ravana, was made by a trick to deposit the Jyotirlinga—one of the emblems of Mahadeva—which he was carrying back to Ceylon. The spot where the *lingam* was deposited is Deoghar, and the *lingam* itself is known as Baidyanath. The sacred well is supposed to contain the waters of all the pools of great sanctity in the world. The temple of Baidyanath, which now shelters the *lingam*, is sacred to Mahadeva. The courtyard of the great temple also contains eleven other temples, none of which are of great antiquity, the oldest, the Baidyanath temple, dating from 1596; it is, however, fairly certain that there must have been a small temple here from very early times.

This sacred site is visited by many thousands of pilgrims each year, particularly on the occasions of the three important fairs. Many people hope for the cure of diseases from which they suffer, and childless women hope for offspring. They believe that the deity appears and gives them commands while they are sleeping on the verandahs of the temple.

Dumka, the headquarters town of the district, is a picturesque place, but being 38 miles from the nearest railway station (Rampur Hat) it is rather a sleepy hollow. There are no buildings of much architectural or historic interest. Close to Dumka is Hijla, where a large annual fair is held, at which there are sports for the Santals. The Provincial



governors used to make it a practice to visit Dumka at the time of this *mela*.

Some account has already been given of the ancient Muslim capital of Rajmahal, which retains but a shadow of its former importance. Nearly all the buildings of the old city are in ruins, and some of them have disappeared altogether, having been used as quarries for the railway or having been overrun by the jungle.

The pass of Sakrigali and the fort of Teliagarhi, to the east of Sahebganj, are places of considerable historical interest, as remarked in the sketch of the history of the district, but the Ganges no longer flows, as it once did, at the foot of the walls of the Teliagarhi fort. Ruins of this fort can still be seen. Near Sakrigali there is a steep rocky hill crowned by a Muhammadan tomb, which is believed to be that of Saiyid Ahmad Makhdum, and to have been erected by Shaista Khan, uncle of Aurangzeb. Bishop Heber mentions the local belief that a tiger visits the tomb every Thursday and crouches near it all night. Captain Skinner, to whose book I have already referred, says that some of his party who went up the hill to see the tomb were actually disturbed by the tiger. The gallant captain professes to have been very sceptical of their story, but it is noticeable that he himself hesitated about going up, and did not stay there longer than he could help.

There is a famous waterfall, situated in a picturesque glen in the hills near Maharajpur railway station, with the pleasant name of Motijharna, the cascade of pearls. The mountain stream here pitches over a cliff nearly 120 feet high, with a ledge about halfway up, so that the falls are in two stages. This beauty-spot is not so well-known now as in the old days when the road and river routes past this point were the main arterial routes in this part of India, and many a leisured traveller went a little out of his way to see the falls.

The vast forest which once covered the whole of the centre of the district now survives only on the hill-sides, and many of these have been practically denuded of vegetation. Of forests which are managed by the forest department the largest single block is that known as the Old

Reserve, about 40 square miles in extent, and situated south of the Bansloi river to the north-east of Dumka. There is still a considerable area of forest and waste land in the Damini which is normally protected forest, but as most of it is undemarcated, it is not possible to do much with it to improve or preserve it. During the revision settlement in 1928 the writer had a map prepared to show where it was possible to form compact blocks of protected forest of reasonable size in the Godda and Pakaur Damini. Such blocks are not easy to find, for although there is a vast area of forest of a sort, it is usually honeycombed with cultivation, and therefore useless for purposes of forest conservation. However half a dozen blocks were marked out and now form the Houlton forests. They will be valuable in time as timber and fuel reserves. The trouble in the Santal Parganas, as in much of Chota Nagpur, was that efforts to conserve forest came too late. Fifty years ago blocks of reserved forest could have been created all over the wooded areas in suitable localities, without hardship to the local people, and such reserves would be invaluable now, both as sources of wealth to the Province and as reserves of fuel and timber for the local inhabitants. It is much more difficult now, with the greatly increased population and the extension of cultivation and shrinking of the forests.

The clearing of the forests meant the disappearance of the cover which once sheltered so many wild animals, including the rhinoceros, elephant and tiger. Leopards are still fairly common—they are not necessarily forest dwellers, like tigers, but are at home in bare and rocky hills, where they can lie up during the daytime in caves and under overhanging rocks. The leopards often take a heavy toll of goats and cattle from the villages near their lair. It is not easy to drive them out in beats, and more are shot by *shikaris* sitting in a tree over a kill or live-goat than by any other method. The Paharias use ingenious bow and arrow traps, with trip wires across the path to discharge the arrow.

Other wild animals such as deer and wild pig are now very rare in the district. The Santals and Paharias are



keen hunters, and are particularly fond of pork; for similar reasons the game birds—pea fowl, jungle fowl and partridge—are rare. In the cold weather great numbers of wild-fowl come to the swamps and broad stretches of water in the Rajamahar subdivision, and fairly large numbers also visit the water reservoirs of Godda, but of recent years the shooting, especially in Rajmahar, has been spoilt by the extension of the practice of wholesale netting. As in the rest of the province snipe are found in the cold weather in any suitable localities like broad stretches of wet-paddy fields.

The leopards which live in the isolated hills are often large animals measuring over 7 feet. The following experience with a leopard is I think worth relating, if only to illustrate the speed with which leopards move, (and human beings when leopards are after them), and the shortcomings of the magazine rifle. A labour-recruiting (vulgarly 'coolycatching') friend of mine named Girard was in Dumka at the time. A villager from about six miles out came in one morning with the news that a leopard had been marked down in a paddy-field. It had, for some reason, failed to get back to the hill before dawn. Girard and I went to the spot by car and on foot. We found forty or fifty villagers surrounding a large paddy-field, the paddy being about knee high; there was a rocky hill about 400 yards away. We took up our positions opposite two corners of the field, hoping that the leopard would run straight for the hill, giving us a chance to bowl it over. Then on our instructions the villagers threw stones in from the far side. Immediately there was a thing like a rocket tearing through the paddy, and a moment afterwards a leopard shot out opposite Girard, and charged him. He was about 40 yards from the field, and was armed with a .303 magazine rifle. He had time to fire one shot, which missed, before the animal was on him. I saw it rear up on its hind legs. The rifle flew out of Girard's hands as the leopard took a swipe at it. After that he appeared to me to be boxing with the animal. Suddenly he snatched off his sun-helmet, shoved it into the leopard's mouth, and ran.

The direction which he took was, much to my annoyance, towards me. Girard was a big, in fact a fat, man.

As he approached me, at a surprising speed, I saw that the leopard was on his heels and trying to bring him down. (He told me afterwards that he felt its hot breath on the back of his neck). As they got nearer, Girard still cutting out an excellent pace, but leading by a short head at most, he had the sense to jink to the right, instead of involving us all in a common catastrophe—'in one red burial blent'. This brought the leopard broadside on to me, and at 4 or 5 yards I could hardly miss. At my shot it rolled head over heels, and the puffing Girard came towards me with outstretched hand. 'Put it there, old man' he said 'you've saved my life.' At that moment the leopard got up and rushed at us with a terrible snarl. I was in the act of reloading. My rifle jammed. I turned to run, hoping to put Girard between me and the infuriated animal, but he was off the mark quicker, and I found my way blocked by his portly form. Fortunately for us the leopard dropped, this time for good, after a few paces.

The only damage sustained by Girard in the fracas was a scratch on the thumb. In relating the story to our friends that evening I happened to mention that I wished I had had a cine-camera in my hand, instead of a rifle, during the hand-to-hand struggle and the chase. Girard did not seem to appreciate this at all.



## CHAPTER XVI

### THE TIRHUT DIVISION

*The Sonpur Fair—Hajipur—Muzaffarpur—Darbhanga—  
Champaran—Bettiah—Missions—Fort Sumeshwar—Crim-  
inal Tribe—Saran District*

THE whole of North Bihar, except the district of Purnea and the northern portion of Monghyr and Saharsa, is included in the administrative division of Tirhut with its headquarters at Muzaffarpur. Communications in North Bihar are not good. This is mainly due to the nature of the country, a great deal of which is subject to inundation, and also to the fact that in the alluvial plain materials for road-building are difficult to obtain, and have to be brought from a distance. It is true that some of the brick and *kankar*<sup>1</sup> roads are good, but the motorist who struggles along some of the muddy roads of North Bihar or swallows a part of the clouds of dust which surround him in the cold weather, may well be surprised to hear that in 1841, according to the *Bengal and Agra Guide and Gazetteer*, the roads, many of which were maintained by the planters, 'were excellent'. Even in 1907 Mr. O'Malley in writing the *Gazetteer* of Muzaffarpur, said 'at the present time the roads are extremely good. The system of roads is extensive and convenient, and generally they are in an excellent state of repair'. The explanation probably is that the unmetalled roads were very nice for the horse-drawn vehicles of those days, but are not so well suited to the automobile.

The railway system (The Oudh and Tirhut Railway) uses

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1. *Kankar* is a calcareous limestone in the form of small pebbles. Lord William Bentinck, in whose time the Grand Trunk Road was started, was an enthusiast for *kankar* as a road-making material. Our ancestors of 2 or 3 generations ago had a regrettable liking for puns of the worst type, and one of them coined for Lord Bentinck the name 'William the Kunkeror.'

the metre gauge. The journey by road, steamer and rail from Patna to Muzaffarpur is a tedious one, and the best way to do this journey is by light aeroplane; but let us assume that the traveller, bent on sight-seeing in North Bihar, crosses the Ganges by steamer, and continues his journey by rail.

The steamer *ghat* (jetty) and railway station on the north bank of the Ganges change their position very considerably in the course of the year, according to the depth of water in the river and the position of the main stream. In the rains the *ghat* may be opposite the Patna courts, while in the dry weather it may be a mile or two up-stream. The whole track has to be lifted and relaid, and new railway stations and jetties built, at least twice a year and sometimes more often. From the *ghat* the train creaks along to the railway station of Sonpur. This is a place of great sanctity to the Hindus, and large numbers of people do ceremonial bathing in the Ganges near here. According to local legend the mythological fight between the elephant and the crocodile took place here, but there are other and more likely claimants to the site.

The Sonpur fair, which is held in the month of *Kartik* (October) is one of the oldest and most famous fairs in India. The numbers attending it are perhaps not so great as a few years ago, when they reached 300,000. It is a great cattle and horse-fair, and one of the chief elephant markets in India. The fair was formerly the occasion for a race-meeting and polo tournament, and European residents of Bihar and Bengal used to assemble in large numbers to attend the fair and to take part in, or watch, the racing and other events. There was a fine ball-room, at which regimental bands used to play. It was a great social occasion, and was for many years the greatest of the North Bihar 'meets'.

Among the distinguished visitors one year were Lord Mayo and Jang Bahadur, Prime Minister of Nepal. The author of *Reminiscences of Behar* describes an exciting incident when one of the elephants brought to the fair for sale became *must* or mad, broke loose, and caused a great panic. Hearing of this Jang Bahadur sent one of his own



trained elephants, a powerful tusker, after the escaped animal. The pursuer caught up with him on a sandbank in the river and at once charged. The mad elephant rushed to meet him, and they met with a crash which made both of them stagger; but the trained elephant gave the other no respite, and pressed on him until he turned and ran for the river bank, where Jang Bahadur's elephant caught him up. With a final charge, with all his great weight behind it, he drove the mad one head-first into the sand, where he lay helpless, watched over by the victor, until the *mahouts* came up to secure him.

The author of the book above referred to tells another story about Jang Bahadur. His treasurer was minus his right hand, which he lost when he was found to have been making away with some of his employer's money, and Jang Bahadur ordered his hand to be cut off. He did not however dismiss the culprit; he was now a most trusted treasurer, for, as Jang Bahadur remarked, 'he is not likely to steal again.'

Leaving Sonpur the train crosses the massive railway bridge over the Gandak, 2176 feet long, and reaches Hajipur. This was an important town in the time of Muslim rule, and was for many years the headquarters of the governors of Bihar. Little now remains of the fine buildings and the fort which once stood here. The founder of the town was Haji Ilyas, ruler of Bengal in the middle of the 14th century; his grave is near the Gandak bridge, and is held in great veneration by Hindu as well as Muslim people of Hajipur. Many pilgrims visit the tomb, which is also the site of an annual fair.

From Hajipur the train moves northwards towards Muzaffarpur, across the fertile plain covered with crops during and after the rains. The traveller may notice a peculiar tree just north of the railway station at Turki. It is an African baobab tree, and was probably planted in the days when a factory stood here. The local superstition is that if you injure the tree, for example by sticking a pin in it, it will utter a squeak or groan. Those interested in trees may see another of this type, a magnificent specimen nearly 40 feet round the trunk, in the Commissioner's compound

in Patna. There is another west of the Patna *maidan*, and yet another may be seen on the Karnachaura hill in the Monghyr fort. Of recent years a few have been planted as road-side trees; some may be seen on the Chaibasa road near Ranchi.

Just before reaching Muzaffarpur the train passes the Greer Bhuinhar-Brahman College, with its well-laid out buildings and grounds and its observatory. Muzaffarpur is a modern town and then there are no buildings of much historical interest. Two lakes of serpentine shape are a feature of the town—they are parts of the old bed of the Little Gandak river—which flows near the town. A branch of the Ram Krishna Mission, under the control of a well-known and well-liked figure, Swami Ritanand, is working in Muzaffarpur, and does valuable work in its hospital and dispensary and eye-clinic, and in many other forms of charity. The chief large-scale industry in the town is the engineering works of Messrs. Arthur Butler, an old-established firm.

The most numerous caste in Muzaffarpur district, as in South Bihar, is that of the Ahirs, who form one-eighth of the whole population. As in Darbhanga, the Maithil Brahmans are an important section of the community. Sitamarhi is the headquarters town of the subdivision of that name; it is the traditional site of the miraculous birth of Sita, daughter of King Janaka. It is also the scene of a great fair in April, at which many of the well-known Sitamarhi cattle are sold. In the palmy days of the planters the Sitamarhi fair was the occasion for making annual purchases of bullocks, timber and other requirements for the factories, and planters or their agents came from all over North Bihar. The fair, as is usual in Bihar, is also a great religious festival.

Darbhangā is a fertile and densely populated district with an ancient history and culture. The chief town is the seat of the Maharajadhiraja of Darbhanga, one of the great landed proprietors of Eastern India, and the leader of the Maithil Brahman community. The country is low-lying, with chains of shallow lakes in many places. The rivers generally flow on beds raised above the surrounding country



by the silt brought down from Nepal. This wide alluvial plain produces heavy crops of rice and many other crops. The easternmost portion of the district is now, as is described in Chapter XXIII, in dealing with the Kosi river, badly affected by the westward swing of that river. The district is famous for its mangoes, and mango trees and groves play an important part in the lives of the people. The planting of these trees is regarded, here and elsewhere among the Hindus, as an act of piety. Mock marriages of mango trees are carried out with elaborate ceremony as the trees approach the fruit-bearing stage.

As in Muzaffarpur district the Maithil Brahmins form a large and important part of the community in Darbhanga. In fact next to the Goalas and Dosadhs they are actually the most numerous caste, and their priestly influence is great. A custom described in the Gazetteer of Darbhanga (1907) must be one of the most remarkable of all marriage customs. The author refers to the various ranks or groups into which this community is divided. A poor man of higher ranking group will sometimes marry a girl of a lower group, a wedding price being paid by the girl's parents. 'This practice' says the Gazetteer 'which is falling into disfavour, has given rise to a class of *Bikanwas* or vendors, who derive their name from the practice of selling themselves or their sons to girls belonging to lower groups. Some have as many as 40 or 50 wives, who live with their own parents and are visited at intervals by their husbands.' The genealogists maintain an amazing system of palm-leaf records of the birth and marriage of every Brahman in Mithila for hundreds of years ; they claim, in fact, that the records cover more than a thousand years.

Champaran district is less highly developed and less densely populated than Darbhanga or Muzaffarpur, and contains considerable areas of hill and forest. A great part of the district is included in the Bettiah Raj, a large estate which has been for many years under the Court of Wards.

Missions have been long established at Bettiah. There is a Roman Catholic Mission College, and schools are managed by the American Zenana Mission. The Sisters of the Holy Cross, and the Indian Sisters of the Sacred Heart, run the

two large hospitals—the King Edward Memorial and the Lady Dufferin hospitals. The Capuchin Fathers were established here as early as 1745, the Raja of Bettiah having appealed to the Pope to permit a mission to be started here. This was after Father Joseph Mary de Bernini had cured the Rani of a serious illness. This same Father was sent to Lhasa, but left there on account of persecution by the Tibetans. At a village a few miles north of Bettiah is another mission with an interesting history, for this was the haven to which the Jesuit Fathers and their converts came after they were expelled from the ancient city of Patan, close to Kathmandu in the Nepal Valley, by the invading Gurkhas in 1769. One of the Fathers, who was an eye-witness of the Gurkha conquest of the Valley, has left a most interesting account of what he saw. He saw the victims of the atrocity committed under the orders of Prithvi Narayan on the men of the city of Kirtipur; when the city surrendered after a brave struggle, he ordered the noses and lips of every man to be cut off. The Fathers did what they could for the sufferers, who looked like an army of men with skulls instead of faces.

North of Bagaha, Champaran forms a salient projecting northwards, almost to the latitude of Kathmandu, to Tribeni on the Gandak. Only forty miles due west of this place is the birthplace of Gautama Buddha, at Rummindei on the borders of the United Provinces and Nepal. Between Bagaha and Tribeni are the extensive forests of the Bettiah Raj, of which some account is given in Chapter XIX. In the hills farther to the east, on the Nepal frontier, there is a place which is well worth a visit, Fort Sumeshwar, which stands at a height of 2,884 feet, and from which one of the finest views of the Himalayas in all India can be obtained. The peaks in sight include three of the giants—Dhaulagiri (26,826), Gosainthan (26,305) and Gaurishankar (23,440).

Sugauli, on the railway west of Motihari, was General Ochterlony's base of operations in the war with Nepal in 1816. At one time he had 20,000 men at this place. The war ended the same year with the peace of Sugauli, a peace which has never been broken; though once, in 1840, it was



threatened when the Gurkhas tried to seize a tract of land near the border containing 141 Bihar villages. Troops were again sent to the frontier, but the Gurkhas withdrew.

At Chauterwa, in Champaran, there is an interesting settlement—a settlement of the members of a tribe which has been declared to be a criminal tribe—the Magahiya Doms. These people had one profession—crime; burglary, theft, and crime in other forms. The object of the Settlement is to rehabilitate the Doms and teach them to earn an honest living. Those who are shown to have reformed are struck off the registers and are free to go where they like; others are allowed to live outside the settlement. The settlement was run with efficiency by the Salvation Army until April 1947, when the Harijan Sevak Sangh of Bihar took charge.

Living in and round the Bettiah forests is an interesting aboriginal race called the Tharus, who have Mongoloid features and are agriculturists and herdsmen. They are believed to number about 40,000. The special provisions for the protection of aboriginal and backward peoples, which were introduced into the Bihar Tenancy Act about the year 1935, can be applied to these people, to protect them from loss of their land to money-lenders and land-grabbers who take advantage of their improvidence and folly.

Saran is the westernmost district of the Tirhut Division. It is cut off from the rest of the Division by the Gandak river, a formidable barrier in times of flood and even in times of low water, owing to the sand-banks which form in it. It is at present unbridged, except for the great railway bridge at Hajipur. The railway bridge which formerly spanned the river above Bagaha was damaged and put out of action in 1924, by flood and changes in the course of the river. There are plans for a new bridge, which will probably include a road-bridge. Saran has been a separate district since 1886. Before that it was administered along with Champaran. It is a compact district, and it has (1941 census) a population density of 1072 to the square mile—exactly the same as Muzaffarpur. Mention has already been made of the great fair at Sonpur, which is in Saran

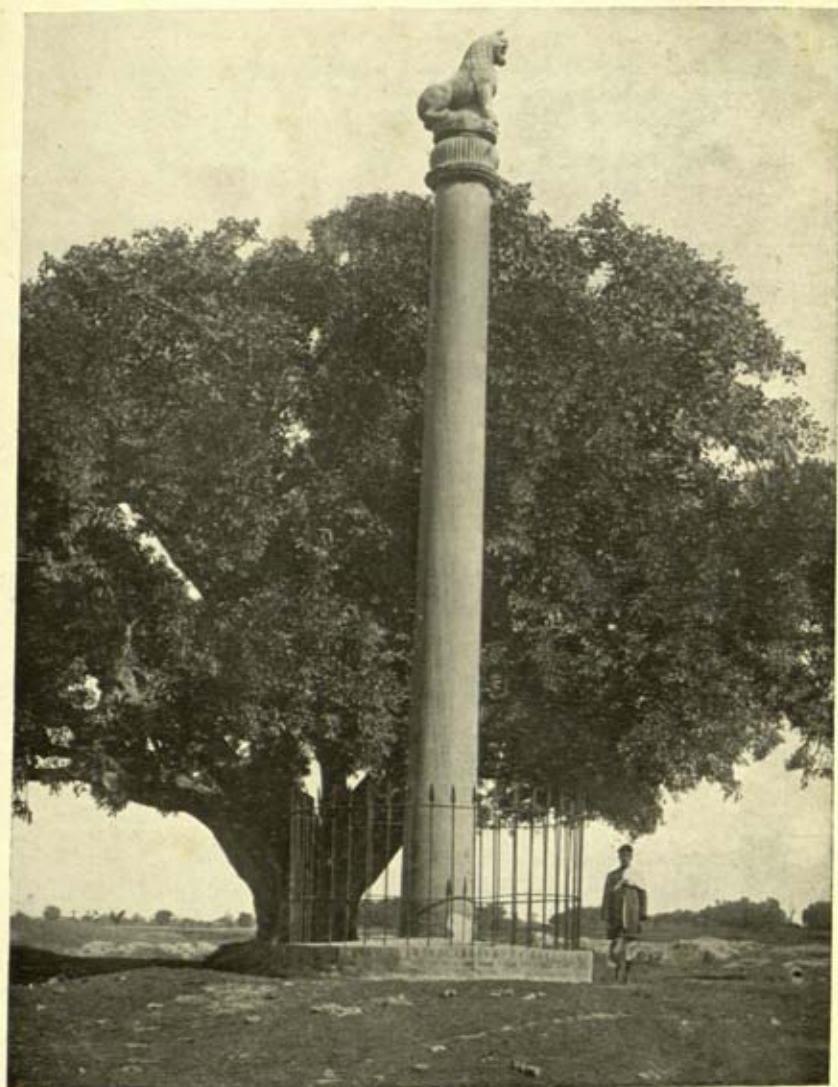


Photo: Archaeological Survey of India

Asokan pillar at Lauriya Nandangarh





Photo : *Archaeological Survey of India*

*The Capital of the Rampurwa pillar, now in the Indian Museum, Calcutta. (This Capital is over 6 feet high.)*

district. The headquarters town, Chapra, was once close to the Ganges and Gogra, and since those rivers shifted farther away from the town, it has lost a good deal of its prosperity. The town of Hathwa in the northern part of the district is the seat of an ancient family, the Maharajas of Hathwa. The town of Marhowrah, fifteen miles north-east of Chapra, is an important industrial centre, with a large sugar factory and distillery, Morton's factory for manufacturing sweets, and the Saran Engineering Works.



## CHAPTER XVII

### ANCIENT VIDEHA AND MITHILA

*The Lichchavis—Vaisali—Asokan Pillars—Muhammadan  
Invasions—Siva Singh—Ancient Relics in Tirhut*

WE may pause in Muzaffarpur, the capital of Tirhut, to recall the early history of this part of the country—the ancient land of Videha, later called Mithila, after the capital. This country included the present districts of Muzaffarpur and Darbhanga, and part of Champaran. Saran, west of the Gandak, was beyond its borders, and in ancient times was part of the great kingdom of Kosala. The site of the original capital of Mithila is believed to be the small town of Janakpur, over the Nepal border. The Vedas tell us how the country was occupied, before the dawn of history, by an Aryan people coming from the Punjab. Agni, the God of Fire, accompanied them on their migration, and when they reached the Gandak told them that their future home lay to the east of that river. One of the kings of Mithila was Siradhvaja Janaka, renowned in story—the father of Princess Sita, of whom and her husband Ramachandra the *Ramayana* tells the immortal tale. Tirhut, in the days of the Upanishads, perhaps 2,600 years ago, was a centre of learning and enlightenment. It had indeed taken the place of the country of the Kurus and Panchalas, far to the west in what is now the Punjab and the western United Provinces, and learned men of those two countries were attracted to the court of Mithila. The greatest name of those days in Tirhut is perhaps that of the sage Yajnavalkya, whose patron, according to tradition, was the same King Janaka. It is worthy of note that in the early years of the Aryans in India, when Tirhut had come to be regarded as a part of the holy land of the Aryans, South Bihar was beyond the pale—a non-Aryan country.

Even in Manu's time South Bihar was not included in the list of Brahmanist lands.

The rule of the kings of Mithila was replaced by the unique oligarchical republics of the Vrijjias, and the capital shifted to Vaisali, one of the most famous cities of ancient India, the site of which is in and near the modern village of Basarh, twenty miles north-west of Hajipur. The most powerful of the Vrijjian clans were the Lichchavis, who ruled from Vaisali, which was also the capital of the confederacy of clans. As we have seen, the Lichchavis came into conflict with the growing power of Magadha, the kingdom of South Bihar; and Ajatasatru, the king of Magadha, first overcame the Western kingdom of Kosala, and then vanquished the Lichchavis. The mother of Ajatasatru was herself a Lichchavi lady. Tirhut thus came under the sway of the kings of Magadha.

It was in Vaisali that the great Jain religious reformer, Vardhamana Mahavira, was born. Vaisali is also closely connected with incidents in the life of Gautama Buddha. He visited the city in response to an appeal from the inhabitants when the city was in the grip of a pestilence; and when his life was drawing to its close he tarried here on his way to Kusinara, where, as he foretold, death awaited him. In those last days of his life he lived in Vaisali, in a house of the woman Amrapali, who, as old Hieuen Tsiang tells us, built a *vihara* in his honour. It was at Vaisali that the second Buddhist Council met. For centuries it remained a great city and a centre of learning and religion, for the Lichchavis retained their influence and much of their power after their conquest by the Mauryas. Centuries later, about the year 300 A.D., a Lichchavi princess married Chandragupta, first of the Gupta kings. Certain gold coins, generally accepted to have been struck by this monarch, are of very great interest. They show on the obverse the figures and names of the king and his queen, Kumari Devi, and on the reverse a lion *couchant* with a goddess seated on it, and the name 'Lichchavis'. It seems clear that the marriage with the Lichchavi princess was an event of great political importance, and it is generally believed that by it Chandra-



gupta I acquired or regained wide territories—perhaps even the capital itself.

The race of the Lichchavis and their organisation must have been of great vitality, for their power endured, whether independently or under the suzerainty of some greater power, for 800 years or more; but when Hieuen Tsiang saw the city of Vaisali in 635 A.D. it was falling into ruin. He notes that the walls had a perimeter of twelve miles, and that the citadel covered a vast area. The artificial lakes were turning into swamps, and of the splendid buildings only the walls were left. It is strange to think of that decay of an ancient and glorious city, mournfully noted by the pious traveller 1300 years ago. In modern times, the last stage of decay must have been rapid, for in 1871 Col. Cunningham could still see the brick ramparts and remains of the towers. And now no trace of Vaisali remains, except when excavators digging into the mounds which mark the site find fragments of broken masonry and pottery, and the clay seals once attached to state documents and the accounts of merchants.

The Emperor Asoka passed through Vaisali, probably more than once. For it was on the royal road to Nepal, which was a part of the dominions of the great ruler. We can still trace that royal road by the monuments erected by Asoka to commemorate events in the life of Buddha or to bear his own carved edicts. After leaving Vaisali, near which Asoka erected a lion-pillar, it passed through Kesariya in Champaran district, where a *stupa* marks the route, and then to Lauriya Araraj and Lauriya Nandangarh, at each of which places he erected a pillar. Thence the road ran to Jankigarh and Rampurwa, where another pillar was erected. The way into Nepal was through the pass at Bhikna Tori. In the valley of Nepal the Emperor erected five stupas in and around the ancient city of Patan, and this is one of the facts which lead many to believe that Gautama Buddha himself had visited the valley. There is a strong tradition in Nepal that Asoka's daughter Chanumati and her Kshattriya husband lived in the valley and founded a *vihara* which is still associated with them and is a place of pilgrimage.

The subsequent history of Tirhut for many centuries is

linked with that of Magadha. One strange episode occurred soon after the death of Harsha in the middle of the 7th century. A Chinese envoy was attacked by the troops of Arjuna of Tirhut, a former minister of Harsha and a usurper to the throne, and his retinue was plundered and men were killed. The usurper was somewhere in Tirhut. The famous Srong Tsan Gampo of Tibet, with an army of Tibetans and Nepalese, invaded Tirhut, utterly defeated the opposing army, and took the usurper prisoner. This same Tibetan king married a princess of Nepal, who, with the help of a Chinese princess who was her co-wife, introduced Buddhism to Tibet. The bronze statue of Tara, representing this Nepal princess, in the courtyard of the great shrine of Shyambhunath near Kathmandu, is one of the most beautiful examples of the golden age of Newar art in Nepal.

The Muslim invaders swept over Tirhut as over the rest of Bengal and Bihar, but their hold was for several centuries a loose one, and some of the local rulers retained positions of semi-independence for a very long time. The last of the kings of Simraon, a city near the Nepal border, was Hara Singh Deva, who was overthrown in 1323 by the emperor Tughlak Shah, who destroyed the walls of the city. The people of Tirhut still recall the rebellion in 1402 of Siva Singh, patron of the poet and pandit Vidyapati, and his cultured wife Lakshmin, who committed suttee when her husband had been carried off to Delhi as a prisoner, and she had had no news of him for twelve years. It was over the border in the United Provinces, on the banks of the Gogra, that Babur defeated the Afghan chiefs of Bihar and Bengal in 1529. Akbar himself led the armies which in 1575 drove Daud Khan from Patna and Hajipur, in the middle of the rainy season. At Birpur, near Hajipur, Knox and Shitab Rai were victorious in the year 1860 in a notable engagement which has been referred to in Chapter V.

Mention has already been made of ancient Vaisali, and of the Asokan pillars. The best preserved of these is the pillar at Lauriya Araraj in Champaran; its capital is missing, but the polish and the carved letters on the column are still perfect. The weight of this great block of sandstone is estimated at no less than forty tons. At Lauriya Nandangarh



the lion capital, over six feet in height, still stands on the column; round the abacus is carved a row of geese or Brahminy ducks. There is a huge brick mound near Lauriya Nandangarh and some strange earthen mounds, examined by Dr. Bloch, which are believed to be sepulchral mounds of the kings of the Vedas.

The lion capital on the Rampurwa pillar was broken in two by some iconoclast of the past, but the two pieces have been joined and are now in the entrance hall of the Calcutta Museum. An interesting fact about the construction of the pillar is that the capital was joined to the column by a massive copper bolt. That belonging to the Rampurwa pillar, about 2 feet long, is exhibited in the museum along with the capital.

## CHAPTER XVIII

### NORTH BIHAR

*Climate—Language—Maithil Literature—Population—Agriculture*

THE climate of North Bihar in the cold weather, November to March, is delightful. As Mr. O' Malley puts it ' The days are bright, warm and invigorating, and as soon as the sun sets the temperature falls and a fire is at once a comfort and a necessity '. But the hot weather and the rainy season, especially the latter (June to October) are much less pleasant. Some parts of North Bihar are healthy, but epidemics of cholera occur almost every year, and in some years the loss of life is very great; while malaria is endemic in many places and bubonic plague breaks out at times. Malaria seems to shift its ground from time to time, and one of the results of the earthquake of 1934 was that it appeared in areas which had been free from it. The shifting of the courses of the rivers, especially the Kosi in east Darbhanga, often causes malaria to appear or become worst in the areas affected by the changes. One of the reasons for the rapid spread of cholera in bad years is the lack of understanding of the rudiments of sanitation in the villages, so that masonry wells which supply drinking water are often seen with cracks or other slight damage which cause filthy surface water to seep into the well. Education and instruction are the chief remedy for this state of affairs, but more inoculation, more hospitals and dispensaries, and more doctors and nurses are necessary. It is a tragedy that this fair land—this garden of India—should be in our own day so subject to terrible diseases like ' million murdering ' malaria and cholera.

It will be news to many people who are strangers to Bihar that the dialect of a great part of this country—Maithili—has



a literary language with a long tradition. We have seen how famous the realm of Mithila was in ancient times, and how there were women of great culture like Lakshmin Thakurain in old Mithila. Its pandits have preserved the fame of its learning. The best known of the poets of Mithila is Vidyapati Thakura, a famous writer in Sanskrit, but also a writer of songs in Maithili, mainly songs about Radha and Krishna. Another writer in Maithili was Manbodh Jha, who wrote in the 18th century. In more recent years Chandra Jha has shown himself to be a gifted writer in Maithili.

Three of the four districts of Tirhut—Saran, Muzaffarpur, and Darbhanga—are among the most densely populated parts of the world, for the population in the first two was, in 1941, 1072 to the square mile, and in the third only slightly less. The population of the division is over 12½ millions and judging by the rate of increase it is probable that this figure will be 14 millions by 1951. This great population is almost entirely rural. There are few towns, none of them with a population exceeding 70,000, and only 3 whose population exceeds 50,000. Only about 3 per cent of the people of North Bihar live in towns. The rest live almost entirely by agriculture—either as actual tillers of the soil, or in some other way from the produce of the land. The principal castes are the Ahirs or Goalas, Babhans, Rajputs, Koiris, Dusadhs and Chamars. Brahmans are also numerous, especially in Darbhanga, and other castes are Kurmis, Mallahs, Nunias and others. The proportion of Muslims in the population of Tirhut is a good deal lower than in other parts of the province.

The soil of North Bihar is for the most part very fertile and has a marked capacity for retaining moisture. In consequence the advantages of irrigation are not brought home to the people, except in a year of exceptionally inadequate or badly distributed rainfall. Doubt is sometimes expressed even by the more enlightened cultivators about the advantages of irrigation; they fear that in some soils there may be a risk of saturation or bringing harmful salts to the surface. However there is no doubt that in large areas irrigation is

essential, if only as a precaution against years of bad rainfall. In some areas, particularly south Muzaffarpur, irrigation is extensively carried out by wells and the Government's plans will no doubt add greatly to the area in which this form of irrigation is used, as well as greatly increasing the volume of water available. Such a development is clearly a vital necessity, in view of the dense and growing population.

There is a common belief in the villages that the croak of a frog presages rain. Hence the custom of getting hold of a frog, shutting him up in an earthen pot, and worrying him until he does croak.

The principal canal system in North Bihar is the Tribeni system in Champaran. The absence of a dam or anicut across the Gandak where the main canal takes off, and the difficulties of the terrain crossed by the canals, impair the efficiency of the system. There is now a proposal to build an anicut over the river somewhere below Tribeni, and to construct a great new series of canals taking off from both banks of the river. This scheme would add much to the fertility of western Tirhut and the eastern United Provinces, besides acting as a control over the river.

The principal of food-crops grown in North Bihar is rice, and after that come barley, maize, wheat, *marua* and gram, and various pulses and other food-crops. *Khesari*, a cheap grain eaten mainly by the poorer classes, is grown in a large area, especially in Saran. *Arhar* is another important crop. Sugar-cane is now perhaps the most important money-crop, but tobacco is a valuable crop in some localities. Chillies are another profitable crop. There are three main harvests—Aghani, Bhadoi and Rabi. The first of these is the Winter crop—chiefly rice. Bhadoi is the early Autumn harvest, reaped in August and September, consisting of early rice, *marua*, maize, millets and other grains. The Rabi crop, which is harvested in the Spring, includes wheat, barley, oats, gram and pulses. A fairly large proportion of the cultivated land—perhaps one-fourth—produces two crops, but there is no doubt that the twice-cropped area could be considerably increased with better irrigation facilities. Valuable harvests of wheat, barley, peas, mustard and other crops are reaped from the *diaras* near the great



rivers. The importance of sugar-cane cultivation and the sugar industry is shown by the fact that there are 37 sugar mills in the Province, all except half a dozen of which are in North Bihar. North Bihar is famous for its fruit, which is an important item of export to other parts of the Province and of India. Muzaffarpur is noted for its liches, Darbhanga for its mangoes, and Hajipur for plantains.

The most important embankments in Tirhut are those along both banks of the Gandak river. The embankments run practically the whole way from the Nepal frontier, where the river debouches from the hills, to its junction with the Ganges. The embankment on the right bank, a broad embankment 12 to 13 feet high, was reconstructed by Government in 1839, and is now maintained by the P.W.D. The country near the Gogri river on the western border of North Bihar is also protected by some embankments. In Muzaffarpur about 1300 square miles of country are said to be protected from floods by embankments,—principally that along the Gandak. Along the Baghmati, the Turki embankment, twenty-six miles long, protects a considerable area of country, and Muzaffarpur town itself is protected from the Little Gandak by an embankment.

## CHAPTER XIX

### THE FORESTS OF NORTH BIHAR

ALONG the northern fringe of the district of Champaran, on the borders of Nepal, lies a belt of forest, nearly all of which is in the Bettiah and Ramnagar estates. Much of it is *sal* forest. That of the Ramnagar estate was formerly valuable, but has now been largely felled. The Bettiah forests are managed on proper silvicultural lines, and great parts of them, especially the *sal* forests, are valuable, situated as they are near the vast cultivated plains of North Bihar with their dense population. To the west the forest merges into the swamps of the Gandak river. One of the most beautiful spots in Bihar is Tribeni where a bungalow (Bhainsalothan) is situated on the high bank of the Gandak, with the Nepal hills on the opposite bank. At this point the Tribeni canal takes off from the Gandak. The road from Bagaha to Tribeni follows the canal for part of the way, and passes through fine forests. At Tribeni the hills on the Nepal side of the river shut out the Himalayan snows, but they are visible in all their glory from all over the rest of Champaran, and indeed throughout the greater part of North Bihar.

The forests and swamps are the haunt of many species of wild life, including tigers, leopards, bears, sambhar and chital deer, nilghai, black buck, and wild pig. Occasionally a Great Indian rhinoceros crosses over from Nepal to the Ramnagar jungles. Peafowl and jungle fowl abound in the forests near the rice-lands. The *kalij* pheasant is found in the hills, and three kinds of partridge, the grey, black and swamp. The *kyah* or swamp partridge is a fine large bird, now becoming rare, as there are few localities suited to its habits. It is found in marshy ground near the Gandak and Kosi rivers, and likes the dense thickets of wild rose which are found in parts of Purnea district. Another bird which



was once common in the open lands near the Gandak and in many other parts of North Bihar was the lesser florican, locally called the *likh*; the larger Bengal florican was also probably fairly numerous. Now these fine birds are extremely rare, and it is doubtful whether the protection which has been granted to them under the Wild Birds and Animals Protection Act will suffice to preserve them from extinction.

The Bettiah Raj keeps, or used to keep, a number of elephants, including some trained to *shikar*, and on the occasion of a big shoot other elephants were called in from other parts of the district. It was a memorable sight to see a long line of perhaps 50 elephants moving across jungle and swamp and grass-land, the guns spaced at intervals along the line. Many kinds of game were put up by the line, and sometimes an unexpected leopard would bound up from the grass or a belt of forest. When a tiger or leopard was marked down, the usual plan was to place the guns in position on their elephants and to drive the animal towards them by a line of beating elephants. Over a great part of this country no shooting can be done without elephants, for the grass is 12 to 14 feet high and a man on foot is lost in it. Often the elephants have to trample down a belt of grass to make it possible for the guns to see animals as they bound across the line. Many were the exciting incidents in such a drive—sometimes too exciting, as when a tiger would leap on to the trunk or head of an elephant, dragging it towards the ground, while the sportsmen in the *howdah* or near-by tried to get in a shot which would not endanger men. (Perhaps it was only a coincidence, but a tiger once sprang on to the back of the very elephant which had been earmarked, before the start of the hunt, to carry his carcass back to the camp. I believe that the tiger got away.) The staunchness of some of the Bettiah Raj *howdah* elephants was amazing; they would stand their ground in the face of a charging tiger. It is queer that these animals, which show such courage in the face of grave danger, are alarmed when some small animal like a young pig darts past near their feet.

At one of these Bettiah Raj shoots we were once beating

for a tiger which was supposed to be in the forest. No tiger appeared, but a great wild pig dashed past my elephant, and on its back was a panther, so little disturbed by the elephants that it had gone on with its normal avocation of hunting. Other incidents will be remembered by many still living who were present at these shoots. They will no doubt remember the evening when a belated elephant arrived back in camp, the sportsman in the *howdah* proudly handing down some peafowl which he had shot. 'These were some of the highest birds I have ever brought down' he remarked. 'Oh yes' innocently remarked his lady companion in the *howdah*, 'the breaches on which they were perching on were tremendously high.' They were great days. The day was spent in the woods and on the plains by the Gandak river, with the snows of the Himalayas towering above the horizon. There was the excitement and expectation of the chase, and the return to a camp lit by bonfires and the light of the stars. On moonlight nights one could often see, on the return journey to camp after the sun had set, the Himalayas lit with the subdued light of the moon, and seeming incredibly high in the sky.

Once towards the end of a day's shoot the long line of elephants was on its way back to camp, when an old cultivator offered to lead us to a place where a large number of peafowl came out every evening to graze in his fields, where the rice was ready for cutting. He said that they were doing great damage. Someone asked him how many there were, and he raised a laugh by replying 'over 500'. We decided to turn off the road home and to have a look at this fabulous spot. Our way took us through a small forest, and after emerging from it we saw before us a wide and shallow valley, nearly all of it under a heavy rice crop. Beyond it was a small but (as we found later) almost impenetrable wood consisting of great trees, a tangle of tall undergrowth with fallen trees concealed in it, and masses of the rough thorny canes which are an obstacle even to elephants. On the outskirts of the wood, and in the rice fields, was a huge gathering of peafowl. They were there in hundreds. The old man was right. The impenetrable wood, into which they ran or flew at the first sign of danger,



was a perfect sanctuary. Here they lived and multiplied, and took heavy toll of the crops of the old man and his friends.

The line of beating elephants was once passing through a belt of grass and bushes. The guns were the other side hoping for shots at partridge and jungle fowl. Suddenly a great panther bounded out of the bushes and made for the line of beating elephants, his aim being evidently to get out of this tight corner while the going was good. The elephants were fairly close together. One of them was a very young animal—almost a baby, and he and his young *mahout* were learning their work from their more experienced colleagues. The panther sailed into the air with a graceful bound and passed through the line, almost over the back of the little elephant, which let out a squeal of terror (the young *mahout* joining in) and bolted for home. To shoot at the panther was impossible, with men and elephants all round it, and I was able to admire fully the rare sight of that black and gold boy stretched out in its great bound, against the dark jungle and the sombre figures of the elephants.

## CHAPTER XX

### THE GREAT BIHAR EARTHQUAKE

THE plain of North Bihar lies at the foot of the highest mountain range in the world, and the alluvium of which the plain is composed is of very great depth—according to geological experts it may be 15,000 to 20,000 feet along the northern edge, where it is nearest to the mountains. Within about 60 miles, therefore, the level varies, from the peaks of the Himalayan range to the rock below the Gangetic valley, by 40,000 feet or a height of over 7 miles. The region is thus one of great strain and instability, more so on its Northern side.

The people of North Bihar never dreamt that their flat and fertile land had this bad reputation. It is true that there had been a very severe earthquake in 1833, but only the vaguest memories of that event survived in the countryside. So that when, at 2.42 p.m. on the 15th January 1934, a deep and awful rumbling sound, seeming to come from underground, was heard, not one in a thousand knew what it portended. A few seconds later the earth began to shake and buildings to collapse. There was a short pause, and then a more violent shaking. In the worst areas people were thrown, or fell, to the ground. In the open country men saw undulations like waves of the sea pass over the land. Great fissures appeared, and sand and water billowed out of them and spread over the countryside. More alarming still, geysers, looking like small volcanoes, appeared in thousands. They spurted water and sand for periods up to half an hour or more. The terrified population rushed into the streets and fields and open spaces. But in some of the towns the buildings collapsed over the streets, crushing and burying many people.

The epicentre of the earthquake was in a belt near the Nepal border, containing the small towns of Sitamarhi and



Madhubani. The area badly affected stretched from Purnea in the east to Sugauli in the west, but one of the worst affected places was forty miles south of this tract—the town of Monghyr, on the south bank of the Ganges, where a spur of the Vindhyan hills abuts on the river. The total loss of life in the earthquake was over 7,250. It is believed that if it had happened at night instead of in the afternoon the loss of life might well have run into six figures. As it was, many people were out of their houses, and most of the others had time to get out; for the shaking had already gone for two minutes or more before the worst shock occurred.

It was fortunate also that there was no large town in the epicentric zone. In the affected towns the majority of the people got out into the open spaces, but where there were narrow and congested streets, as in Monghyr, they could not escape in time and were buried under the falling houses. In Monghyr town, where the greatest loss of life took place, the city consisted partly of very old and tall houses and narrow streets. In this city the death roll was estimated at 1250, but the actual figure can never be known, because removal of the great depth of debris under which the dead were buried was impossible, though great efforts were made for days afterwards in any place where there was a chance of anyone being alive, and many were rescued. In Muzaffarpur town the loss of life was also heavy—956, and in Darbhanga town it was 310. The remainder of the casualties were almost entirely in the villages and small towns, where the loss of life was mainly among the *purda* women.

The covering of a great part of this fertile land with deposits of sand shot up from below was a matter of grave anxiety to the government and the people. Many feared that large areas would be turned into desert. In many places the sand was 2 to 3 feet deep, though generally it was less deep. But the hot winds of North Bihar began to scatter it from March onwards, and in most localities the monsoon completed the work of scattering it and mingling it with the soil.

The phenomenon of the geysers must have been a most



*Photo: J. B. Auden*

*Devastation caused by the earthquake in Motihari*

*A crater left by one of the  
geysers which appeared  
during the earthquake.*







*The Judge's house, Muzaffarpur, before and after the earthquake.  
The small palm tree appears in both pictures.*

alarming sight. One planter was motoring along a North Bihar road when he felt the car shaking (he might well have put that down to the North Bihar roads) and then the whole vast plain around him suddenly sprouted into miniature volcanoes by the hundred. This was his familiar land of North Bihar, over which he had walked and ridden and motored for thirty years. The story goes that he could think of only one explanation—that he had suddenly died and had gone to the wrong place. The scientific explanation is that the shaking caused the soil to settle, compressing the layer of water-laden sand below the surface and causing it to force its way out under pressure.

Railways, roads and bridges suffered very severe damage. In some places steel bridges were buckled by the moving together of the banks of the rivers. Railway lines were twisted and roads sank. Some buildings sank bodily into the ground, so that the first floor windows were almost at ground level. At one time it was feared that there had been such serious changes in the level of the country as to affect the course of the great rivers, but a geodetic survey showed that the land had nowhere sunk more than 4 feet. Even this was serious, and caused much loss and hardship in many localities which, though previously immune from flood, were inundated in the following moonsoon.

In the Valley of Nepal, where stand the ancient cities of Kathmandu, Patan and Bhatgaon, grave loss of life occurred, and very serious damage was done. Many ancient buildings collapsed, and many treasures of architecture and some of the beautiful wood-carvings of old Nepal were lost. Fortunately the great temples stood unscathed, and it was found possible to restore the old cities and their Durbar squares, with the palaces and shrines and statues, almost to their former splendour. It is strange that the earthquake of 1833, just over a century earlier, occurred in almost the same area and caused damage in the same places in North Bihar and Nepal.

The earthquake left in its train problems of very great urgency and magnitude. The material damage to buildings, roads, bridges and railways was enormous. Many thousands of people were left homeless and without shelter.



Damage to the sugar factories created a serious problem of disposal of the sugar-cane crop, which was the principal standing crop at the time of the earthquake. One of the steps taken was to collect large numbers of the old-fashioned bullock-driven mills, and to arrange for the speedy manufacture of many more. More than 3,000 of these mills were distributed, with the necessary pans to convert the juice into the commodity known as jaggery or *gur*. A cane marketing board was set up. Some of the factories resumed work with comparatively little delay. The result was that the great bulk of the crop was crushed either by the bullock-driven mills or in the factories.

There was an immediate response to the appeal for help. The Viceroy opened an Earthquake Relief Fund, and more than 60 lakhs of rupees were subscribed. The amount raised by the Lord Mayor of London was included in this fund. Other funds were raised, the most important of which was that raised in response to an appeal by Dr. Rajendra Prasad, leader of the Congress party in Bihar. The fund, which amounted to over 30 lakhs, was administered by the Bihar Central Relief Committee, the first meeting of which was presided over by Mahatma Gandhi. The Committee decided to distribute the fund in the fullest co-operation with the government.

Grants were made from the Relief Funds to enable people to rebuild their houses, to re-open businesses, to clear the sand deposits from the land, to provide boats in readiness for the next rains, to re-open wells and for other general relief work. Many well-known charitable organisations, including the Indian Red Cross Society, the Indian Medical Association, the Servants of India Society, the Ramkrishna Mission and the Marwari Relief Association, did valuable humanitarian work. The report on the Earthquake by the Relief Commissioner, the late Mr. W. B. Brett, C.I.E., I.C.S., is the best testimony to the energy and resourcefulness with which he tackled the unprecedented problems which confronted him.

## CHAPTER XXI

### INDIGO

#### *The Planters of Tirhut*

THE rise of the indigo industry is a unique, and now closed, chapter in the history of Tirhut. There were European trading establishments, both Dutch and English, at a number of places in North Bihar soon after the middle of the 17th century, but they were mainly concerned with the collection and refinement of saltpetre. The earliest English settlement was at Singia near Lalganj, where a factory was established before 1676.

Indigo had long been cultivated in Saran and other districts, but it was not until about 1778 that modern methods of manufacture were introduced into India, the pioneer being M. Bonnaud, who had lived in the French West Indian colony of St. Domingo, before its destruction an important producer of indigo. M. Bonnaud started several indigo factories in Bengal soon after his arrival in Calcutta in 1777. It was Mr. Grand, the then Collector of Tirhut, who started the first indigo factories in Bihar. His name evokes a *cause célèbre* of the Calcutta of the 18th century. It is a curious ramification of history which links the name of an obscure administrator with those of the author of the 'Letters of Junius' and of one of the most beautiful women of her age, the Princesse de Bénévent and the wife of Talleyrand.

Mr. George François Grand was a member of an ancient French family settled in England. He came to India as a cadet, and a few years later was posted to Calcutta as a writer. He stayed for a time with Warren Hastings. At Chandernagore, where incidentally he learnt something about indigo, probably from Mr. Bonnaud, he met the beautiful daughter of M. Werlée, a French official at that



place, and in 1777 they were married. The bride was just under fifteen years of age. Six years later the incident took place which led to the famous trial of Philip Francis, Member of the Supreme Council, who in 1786 fought the duel with Warren Hastings—a trial famous on account of the personalities concerned in it. The Chief of the Supreme Court which heard the case was Sir Elijay Impey, a great personality and a friend of Warren Hastings. The charge against Francis was (in effect) one of having alienated the affections of Mrs. Grand from her husband. The three judges, by a majority, found the charge proved, and fined Francis fifty thousand rupees ('Siccas, Brother Impey, Siccas!') In due course Mrs. Grand reached Europe, and there, in 1802, having divorced Mr. Grand, she married Talleyrand; and four years later, on her husband's promotion by Napoleon to the rank of Prince, she became the *Princesse de Bénévent*. She died in 1824, fortified by the rites of the Church.

The example of Mr. Grand (I mean in the matter of indigo) was followed by many others in Bihar, and by 1810 the indigo factories of Tirhut were employing, directly or indirectly, nearly 50,000 people. Indigo was not the only crop—the planters grew a good deal of sugar-cane also. In Muzaffarpur district the oldest factories were those at Daudpur, Saraiya, Dhuli, Athar, Shahpur, Kanti, Motipur (founded by the Dutch as a sugar factory in 1789), Deoria and Banara. In Saran, the first factory was at Sitepur in Sonpur *thana*, and in Champaran, the first was founded by Colonel Hickey at Bara. In Purnea there was a factory before Grand's time, at Nilganj, near Purnea town.

It is interesting to recall that the firm hold which the European planters held in later years in Champaran dated from the days of the financial crisis in the Bettiah Raj—in 1876, when the estate had fallen heavily into debt through the mismanagement and extravagance of the Maharaja. A loan of nearly 95 lakhs was floated by Guilliland House, to replace the estate on a sound financial footing, and a manager was appointed. Under the conditions of the loan permanent leases of villages were to be made to many of

the indigo planters. At one time the indigo concerns were the landlords of nearly half of the cultivated land in Champaran district.

About the year 1850 the high prices of indigo led the planters to abandon the cultivation of sugar-cane in favour of more indigo. The industry reached its highest level of prosperity in the 1890's and was still expanding when the discovery of the German artificial dyes spelt its inevitable ruin. Before this event the number of factories and their dependent stations (or out-works) in the 4 districts of Tirhut and in Purnea was at least 325, and about four per cent of the cultivated land was under indigo. There was a renewed demand for indigo, and a temporary revival of the industry, during the first world war.

There was trouble from time to time in the latter half of the nineteenth century and early in the twentieth, between the planters and their tenants, and this came to a head while the revision settlement of Champaran was going on in 1917. A modified form of an older system called the *tinkathia* system was prevalent in the district. A raiyat whose landlord was a planter had to agree, for a term of years, to grow indigo, or sometimes sugar-cane or other crops, in 2 or 3 kathas of each bigha of his land (about  $1/7$  to  $1/10$  of the area) on the instructions of his landlord. The tenants disliked the system, as indigo cultivation required a good deal more time and labour than other crops, and with the rise in prices of other produce they objected strongly to having to grow what they considered a less profitable crop like indigo. There were other grievances of the tenants, and Mahatma Gandhi took up their cause. The facts to which he drew attention and which came to light in the Settlement led to the setting up of the Agrarian Committee of 1917, and to the passing of a special agrarian act abolishing the *tinkathia* system. The indigo concerns were owned and managed mainly by Europeans, and in the hey-day of the industry the number of Europeans in North Bihar must have run into many hundreds. The number gradually fell with the decline of the industry, though the factories turned to other crops, and several sugar-factories were started in North Bihar. The end of the chapter came with the Second World



War. During and after the war, the few remaining planters, taking advantage of the high prices which then prevailed, sold their properties, and the planter community was virtually extinct. Indigo is still grown in small quantities for certain special purposes, but it is no longer of commercial importance. Some of the roomy and comfortable bungalows of the planters are still standing, others are falling into ruin, and many were destroyed or rendered uninhabitable in the earthquake of 1934. Perhaps the largest of these old houses was that at Kanti, which was said to have contained 64 rooms and was built in 1788. It was almost totally destroyed in the earthquake. The author of *Reminiscences of Behar* mentions that he stayed at Kanti house in 1848, and describes the beautiful surroundings and grounds, with a drive which 'meandered through hedges of lovely roses.'

There is little on record which can help posterity to visualise the life of the North Bihar planters in the days of their prosperity. The most readable account which I have come across is in a book by James Inglis, a planter who spent many years in Purnea and Champaran in the 1860's—*Tent Life in Tiger Land, Sport and Work on the Nepal Frontier*. The author describes the day-to-day life of an indigo planter, and gives a clear account of the process of manufacture of indigo. The book contains as usual plenty of tiger-stories, but the author disarms the reader who might think these too numerous by a little anecdote about a 'well-known Anglo-Indian raconteur' (this sounds, I fear, like a euphemism for a now vanishing type of club-member) who told at a dinner party a true but remarkable tiger-story. An old friend of his, who was also at the dinner-table, had actually been an eye-witness of the incident, and at the end of his story the narrator appealed to him to confirm it. 'Sorry, old man' replied the friend, without hesitation, 'I can't recall anything of the kind.' Furious at his friend's perfidy, the story-teller took the first opportunity of tackling him. 'Why did you let me down like that?' he asked. 'Well', replied the other 'I knew of course that the story was true, but I could see that nobody else believed it. One liar at the table was bad enough,

and with two of us the situation would have been even more awkward.'

It must have been a great life for a young and active man. The pay was low and the work hard; but the life was an open-air one, spent largely in the saddle, visiting the outlying farms and the indigo plots of the villagers, and supervising the cultivation, planting, weeding, and later the manufacture. There was plenty of shooting, at both big game and small. There were 'meets', where the planters and their wives and friends assembled at their clubs like Motihari, to take part in polo, horse-racing, tennis and dancing. The sport which they ranked highest was hunting the wild pig which lived in the jungle patches and the tall crops, and caused great damage to the crops. Pig-sticking is a sport which calls for nerve and skill on the part of both horse and rider. It is a dangerous game, for a mistake, or even an accident like the horse stumbling or falling, may mean death to the hunter. The boar is one of the bravest of wild creatures, and one of the best-armed. His razor-sharp tusks, with the weight of his great head and neck behind them, can inflict the most terrible wounds on man or horse.

In a community containing a fairly large number of active young men, accustomed to a life in the saddle and anxious to let off steam, equestrian contests were naturally common, and some were on original lines. Thus the Old Planter recalls in his *Reminiscences of Behar* an occasion when he and some other young bloods arranged a steeplechase for which the starting-point was inside the drawing-room of the house at the Attur factory—a house which stood on a plinth twenty feet high, with a narrow flight of steps.

The planters were noted for their high spirits, especially when they assembled for their meets, and practical jokes were common. The newly joined young assistant—known to the planters as a 'creeper,'—must have had an anxious time, for he was the usual butt for the wags. But the young I.C.S. officer, newly posted to a North Bihar subdivision, also had reason to fear the exuberant fun of the planters, as one young man found when he dropped in at a planters'



meet many years ago, and stayed the night. He retired early to his out-door bed, under the benign sky of a North Bihar Autumn, but was rudely awakened by being hurled into the air by a charge of gunpowder placed under his bed. The visitor had to be on the look-out for horse-play of this kind, but the planters were the soul of hospitality, and virtually kept open house to all who cared to visit them.

Little is left to recall the palmy days of indigo, except the concrete vats, now crumbling and overgrown with wild flowers, where the harvest of indigo leaves was pressed and soaked, and where hundreds of coolies, standing in the vats, used to beat up the fermented liquid with furious energy, while the colour changed from gold-green to dark blue, and the dye was born. The planters have gone, and with them have disappeared most of their clubs, their ball-rooms, tennis courts and polo grounds, scenes of many a meet in the days of their prosperity.

## CHAPTER XXII

### EAST OF THE KOSI RIVER

#### *Purnea—the Kosi—North Monghyr—Saharsa*

' *Na zahar khao, na mahur khao. Marna hai, to Puraniya jao.* ' Don't take poison. If you have to die go to Purnea.' This is perhaps a libel on this interesting district, but it shows how the rest of Bihar regarded Purnea. Even in our own time a transfer to Purnea was sometimes regarded almost as a censure. According to local tradition the old name Puraniya means the country of the lotus, though others think it is derived from the words 'Pura Aranya' or entirely forest. The people to the east of the Mahananda river are a Bengali-speaking race, mainly Rajbansis, while the remainder of the district is populated by the same castes as the rest of Bihar. There are large numbers of Muslims in this country east of the Mahananda. Purnea is an alluvial plain, the western part of which is profoundly affected by the vagaries of the Kosi. Near Purnea town there are wide prairies, which afford pasturage to great herds of cattle and flocks of sheep.

For many generations the Kosi has been the cause of great suffering and devastation. Emerging from the Nepal hills, a vast and rapid torrent in the rains and with the melting of the snows, it keeps to no stable channel, but swings across the level plain, destroying villages and cultivation and leaving wildernesses of sand and swamp and jungle in its wake. The problem of the Kosi cannot be tackled by embankments, though there is the ancient Birbandh, an embankment 20 to 30 feet high which runs southwards from the Nepal border for 50 miles. It was formerly thought to have been a fortification, but it is now generally held that it was constructed to stop the westward swing of the Kosi. The river has breached the Birbandh, and a few years ago



swung westwards across the town of Madhipura, flooded Supaul, and began to inundate the eastern portion of the District of Darbhanga.

I was at that time acting as Commissioner of the Tirhut Division, and it was a tragic sight to see the isolated village sites, surrounded by wastes of water. One had to visit many villages by boat, and in many places the outlines of once fertile fields, and even roads and culverts, could be seen below the surface of the water over which the boat was passing. The unfortunate inhabitants were afflicted not only by the loss of their arable lands, but by epidemics of malaria, cholera and other diseases, aggravated by privation, which the encroachments of the dreaded river bring in their train. The organising of relief—food, medical supplies etc.—is a formidable task in these circumstances.

Years ago an engineer referred to the Kosi in these terms 'the Kosi is an impudent hussy who leaves her bed at night and seeks strange beds, and that is why no engineer will willingly have anything to do with her, for fear of his reputation.' However the problem is now being tackled, and a great dam is to be constructed at the point where the river passes through a gorge in Nepal. This dam will be even higher than the great Boulder Dam in the U.S.A., and it is confidently expected that it will bring prosperity to a wide area of country and relieve the countryside from the ravages of the river.

One of the reasons for the destructiveness of the Kosi is that it deposits huge quantities of sand over the country over which it flows, and it takes one, or even two, generations to get the land back to fertility. The rate at which the sand is deposited is almost incredible. Within 4 years an indigo factory was buried in sand so that only the chimneys were visible. The areas deserted by the river are usually a mass of reeds and jungle which harbour wild pig and swamp-partridge. A hundred years ago these wildernesses were the haunt of tigers, leopards, hog-deer and even the rhinoceros. Buchanan-Hamilton says that in his day (about 1810) the population seemed to be actually diminishing, for the extreme timidity and listlessness of the people prevented them from being able to repel the encroachments

of wild beasts.' Within living memory Purnea was a great sporting country, for there was still much forest along the borders of Nepal and along the Kosi in the north, and tigers were numerous. Those were the days of great *shikaris* like the Shillingfords. Wild buffaloes are still found on a few *diaras* and swamps.

In the palmy days of the kingdom of Anga in the modern Bhagalpur, the western part of Purnea district formed part of that kingdom. After Anga was conquered by Bimbisara it became part of the dominions of the rulers of Magadha. In the time of Sasanka, king of Gaur, Purnea was made subject to his rule, until Harsha defeated him about the year 620 A.D. Later Purnea was in the territories of the Pala and Sena kings. During Moghul times it was a frontier province under military rule. The boundary between Bihar and Bengal was at that time, until the 18th century, when 5 mahals were transferred to Purnea, the old Kosi river.

The following account, from Mr. Byrne's Settlement Report of Purnea, is of interest as showing how indistinct was the dividing line between the religious practices of Muslims and the lower castes of Hindus:—

In every village can be found a *Kaliasthan*, and Hindus and Muhammadans celebrate their characteristic festivals together. At the time of marriages, Muhammadans perform some ceremony at the *Bhagwati Asthan* and put vermilion on the bride's forehead. Attached to almost every house, even of Muhammadans, is a little shrine called *Khudai Ghar*, or God's house, and prayers are offered there in which the names of Allah and Kali both figure. When ill, even Muhammadans call in a Hindu *Ojha* (priest) who recites some *mantras* (charms) over the sick man. They freely offer goats, fowls, pigeons and the first fruits of trees and crops to purely Hindu deities, and especially to the village godling, who generally lives in the most convenient tree. The actual sacrifice is done by a Hindu. Hindus and Muhammadans alike yoke cows in their ploughs in this locality. All the low class Hindus, and the degenerate Muhammadans believe implicitly in evil spirits.



The remarks about the principal crops of the rest of North Bihar apply in the main to Purnea also. But Purnea has one valuable crop which is hardly grown at all in the rest of the province—jute. As a money crop it is a valuable addition to the harvests, though it to some extent ousts paddy.

North Monghyr consists at present of the subdivisions of Begusarai and the northern half of the Sadar subdivision. It is likely that there will be administrative changes resulting in altered district boundaries before long. One idea is to create a new district by amalgamating Begusarai with parts of Muzaffarpur and Darbhanga districts. The whole of North Monghyr is a flat alluvial plain, much cut up by rivers and containing extensive swamps. Large areas are subject to prolonged flooding in the rains, particularly the eastern portion. The marshes in the cold weather are the home of thousands of wild-fowl, and here are the sites of some of the most famous duck-shoots of Bihar.

The course of the Ganges is liable to considerable fluctuation, and this, together with the depositing of rich silt deposits by the receding river, causes the formation of the fertile riverine lands known as *diaras*. Large *diaras* are formed in the areas east and west of Monghyr town. Some of these are of great extent, the largest being over 40 square miles, and produce very heavy crops. In times of flood the *diaras* are submerged, and a few miles above Monghyr the river is then 8 miles wide. A good deal of rice is grown in North Monghyr, but the principal crop is probably maize. A lot of wheat is also grown, also gram, barley and *marua*. Sugar-cane is growing in importance.

The Ganges is the home of a remarkable creature called the Gangetic porpoise. They can often be seen rolling half out of the water like their salt-water brethren. The local name for the porpoise is 'sisi', from the hissing noise which it is supposed to make as its long snout breaks water. The *gharial*, a crocodile with a long nose with a knob at the end of it, is common in the Ganges. It is mainly a fish-eating reptile. In some of the rivers of North Monghyr, especially the Tiljuga, the more dangerous 'mugger,' the blunt-nosed crocodile, abounds. In a few places in North Monghyr,

where there is dense bush and thorn jungle in swampy ground, the swamp partridge is found. This is a fine large bird, but unless the sportsman has an elephant to ride on and others to beat through the jungle, he will have little chance of bagging any.

The Kabar Tal, in the north of the Begusarai subdivision, is one of the best places in the district for wild-fowl shooting, and it is remarkable also for an island known as Monkey Island. The authorities in the time of Lord Cornwallis must have had a soft corner for monkeys. At any rate they made an annual grant for feeding the monkeys on this island, and for keeping alight, night and day, a lamp in the island-temple. After a few years it was noticed that the light had gone out, and, furthermore, that the monkeys were looking thin and the priests fat. The obvious inference was drawn and the government grant ceased.

The sub-district of Saharsa was originally separated from Purnea district by the Kosi river, but as we have seen that river has not swung far to the west. A great part of the new district is subject to annual inundation from the many rivers which wander across the country from the Himalayas towards the Ganges. The great extent of the floods is due partly to the fact that the rivers which flow into the Ganges are inadequate to take the great volume of water coming down from the hills. Sometimes it is possible to go by boat across almost the whole of the district, and part of North Monghyr, with only the raised village sites showing, and sometimes even they are submerged. Some years ago (about 1933) I happened to visit Madhipura where the Kosi, swollen with the melting snows of the Himalayas, was racing past the east of the town and visibly encroaching on it. Already some of the public buildings were crumbling in the swift current. As a result of a short-lived spate a few months earlier some of the houses were standing in two or three feet of mud and silt. Later the river swept further to the west, leaving Madhipura more or less high and dry, and attacking Supaul. Saharsa, which has been chosen as the headquarters of the new sub-district, is on a ridge slightly above the rest of the country, and has so far been left alone by the river.



## CHAPTER XXIII

### CHOTA NAGPUR

#### *The Country and the People— The Plateau—the Aborigines—Mundas and Oraons*

CHOTA NAGPUR can fairly claim to be one of the most attractive parts of the Indian Peninsula. For five or six months of the year, from October onwards, the days are sunny and bracing (the mean temperature in December is 73) and the nights cool—in the Winter in fact the temperature often drops below freezing point at night. In April and May the temperature may pass the 100 mark, but the nights are much cooler than in the plains, and the very dry climate makes the visitor from Bengal feel that he is coming to a bracing hill-station. It is in the rains (June to September) that the climate shows the greatest advantage over the plains, for the atmosphere rarely becomes saturated with moisture, and 'prickly heat', that bane of Bengal, usually disappears within a couple of days of arrival in Ranchi. The scenery of the main plateau is most attractive, with its undulations, detached abrupt hills and forest tracts. Groves of ancient mango trees, many of them of enormous size, are a prominent feature of the landscape of Chota Nagpur. They are survivals of a time when it was considered to be an act of piety to plant such groves. The custom has fortunately not died out altogether even now, and one still hears of the laying-out of fresh mango orchards to celebrate some auspicious event in the life of a landholder, or to commemorate a member of the family. Great tamarind and other useful trees give shade to the hamlets. The sacred groves of the Mundas are often at a distance from the village, and are remnants of the primeval jungle which were spared by the axe of the pioneers.

When the rainy season is well-advanced all the lowlands

and much of the uplands are covered with a sea of green as the paddy grows rapidly in the wet soil. In the cold weather the higher rolling ground of the village uplands is covered with the bright yellow flowers of the *sirguja* plant, and in the clear air of Chota Nagpur these broad expanses of sunlit yellow, against the dark groves and the blue hills, make an unforgettable picture. Among the trees which add colour to the landscape are the *kusm* trees, on which lac is grown. In some parts of the Ranchi district they are very numerous, and in the Spring the semi-transparent young leaves for a few days take on the most wonderful shades of bronze and red and gold. The *palas* tree, the 'flame of the forest,' is also common, especially in and near the forest (it is also a lac-bearing tree) and at the beginning of the hot weather it seems to light up the countryside with its masses of orange-red flowers. The *kachnar* tree (*Bauhinia* species) is a pleasant sight at the end of the cold weather, with its profuse blossoms of white and delicate mauve and pink. Belts of the *sal* forest which once covered the whole plateau still survive on the hills and in broken ground, or in places where steps were taken to preserve it before the advance of cultivation and the growing demand for timber could cause its destruction.

To complete the attraction of Chota Nagpur, the aboriginals, who predominate on the plateau, are a lovable and cheerful race. There is sport and relaxation for the shikari, the golfer and tennis player. There are many worse places to spend a holiday than Ranchi or Hazaribagh.

The name 'Nagpur' is probably taken from the Nagbansis who ruled the country. 'Chota' is a corruption of 'Chutia,' a village on the outskirts of Ranchi where the remains of the old fort of the Nagbansi chiefs, ancestors of the present Maharaja, can still be seen. The plateau really consists of three steps. The highest is in the west of the Province, where the *pats*, as the high plateaux are locally called, are 3,000 to 3,500 feet above sea level, the highest point being 3,819 feet. On one of these *pats* is situated Netarhat, a beauty spot which will be described in detail later. The next level contains a great part of



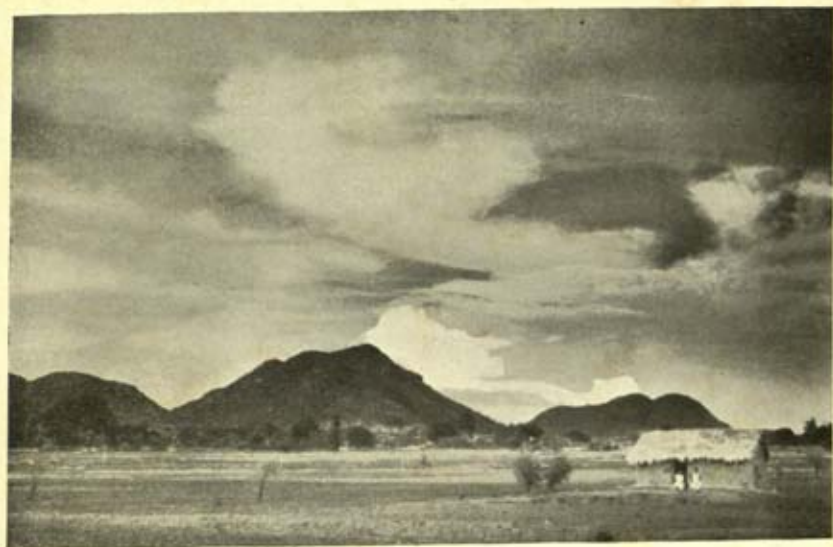
the Ranchi and Hazaribagh districts and a part of Palamau, its general height being about 2,000 feet, and on this main plateau stand the towns of Ranchi and Hazaribagh. The country is undulating and studded with prominent gneissic hills, often dome-like in outline. Over a great part of the Ranchi district the vast forests which once covered it have given place to cultivation and rolling uplands, but in Hazaribagh, where the soil is less fertile and confused rocky hills predominate, there are still great areas of forest.

The lowest step of the plateau is at an average level of about 1,000 feet, and includes the districts of Manbhum and Singhbhum and the remainder of the Chota Nagpur Division. Hills are a striking feature of the western and southern parts of the Manbhum district. Parasnath mountain (4,480 feet) dominates the landscape of a great part of the district. In the neighbourhood of Jhalda, lofty sugar-loaf hills attract the attention of the traveller by road or rail from Calcutta to Ranchi; one of these, Bansa hill, rises abruptly to a height of a thousand feet from the plain. In the north-east of the district is the hill massif of Panchkot, and in the south is the Dalma range, culminating in the Dalma peak (3,407 feet) which overlooks Jamshedpur in Singhbhum.

The numbers and percentages of the total population, of persons recorded as aboriginals, or members of 'tribes' in the census of 1941, are as follows:—

<i>District</i>	<i>Numbers</i>	<i>Percentage of total population</i>
Hazaribagh	478,253	27
Ranchi	1,173,142	70
Palamau	323,106	36
Manbhum	678,126	33
Singhbhum	668,597	40

The above percentages include both those members of the tribes who have adhered to their ancestral religion and those who have become converted to Christianity. By far the greatest number of tribes-people professing



*Landscape of West Manbhum—the lowest step of the Chota Nagpur plateau*



*Landscape in Ranchi district—the middle step*





*View showing how the soil on the plateau is terraced for rice-cultivation*



*On the Netarhat plateau—the highest step*

Christianity are in the Ranchi district, where they number (according to the census of 1941) 285,000 out of a total Christian population of 368,023 in the whole province of Bihar.

It will be seen therefore that a large proportion of the people of Chōta Nagpur are members of aboriginal tribes, and that in the Ranchi district they are in a great majority. The aboriginal tribes are divided into two main divisions, the larger consisting of the Mundas, Santals, Hos and some smaller tribes, and the smaller mainly of Oraons. There is no linguistic connection between the two groups. Oraon is a Dravidian language, while the Munda group of languages, of which the principal forms in Chota Nagpur are Mundari, Santali and Ho, belongs to a larger group of languages known as ' Austro-Asiatic ' which, as Dr. Hutton points out, is one of the most widely distributed language groups in the world. For its northern outpost is in the Punjab and its southernmost limit in New Zealand; while from east to west it reaches Malacca, the Nicobar islands, Madagascar and Easter Island. In physical type there is obvious similarity between the Mundas of Chota Nagpur and the Oraons. Both have broad noses, luxuriant, but not woolly hair, generally dark skins and a short sturdy frame. The customs and culture of the two races are also similar.



## CHAPTER XXIV

### HISTORY OF CHOTA NAGPUR

*Immigration of Mundas and Oraons—Early Aryan Settlements—Muhammadian Period—Beginnings of British Rule—Agrarian Unrest—Reforms—the Birsa Rising—the Chota Nagpur Tenancy Act—the Settlements*

THERE are very good grounds for thinking that the tribes which now inhabit Chota Nagpur immigrated at some early period, probably moving from the Ganges valley and the Son river through Palamau, and that they displaced earlier races of which little traces are left. There is some reason to believe that in the more remote past the Oraons took a different direction in their wanderings from the Mundas, and that after penetrating into western India south of the Narbada they returned northwards and eastwards to the Son valley and ultimately to Chota Nagpur. As we have seen in discussing the history of Palamau and Shahabad, the ancient fort of Rohtas on the Son, in the latter district, plays an important part in the traditions of the Oraons and of several other aboriginal tribes.

Of the earliest Aryan settlers we know little. The generally accepted theory is that there was not, in the early days of Magadha's rise to power, any large-scale immigration of Aryans into this part of the world. There were, however, detached settlements along the trade and pilgrim routes, particularly in Manbhum. Mr. Beglar, who toured through part of the province in 1872-3, traced several of these important routes and the remains of the buildings of the settlements at various points along them.

It is probable that these settlements were over-run at some period by the surrounding tribes. The early settlers may have been Jains, as there are many traces of Jain

influence in the remains of the old buildings, and the Saraks of Manbhum are the descendants of the Jains of early times. There are stories of a visit by a Jain saint to Manbhum. The passage quoted in the Manbhum Gazetteer on this subject is remarkable for this quaint turn of English—'The people barked at him with dogs'.

To the Muhammadan historians the whole of Chota Nagpur was in the tract which they knew as Jharkhand, the forest country. Sher Shah is said to have sent an expedition to secure a famous white elephant from the Raja of Jharkhand. In 1585 Akbar sent an expedition which resulted in the Raja agreeing to pay some form of tribute and after that there were several expeditions into Jharkhand, the object being usually to get hold of diamonds. In 1616, in the reign of Jahangir, there was a more serious invasion, and the Raja was taken prisoner and taken to Delhi. He remained a prisoner there and in Gwalior, and at this latter place he earned his release by his knowledge of diamonds. The story is that the Emperor was thinking of buying a large diamond, but the Raja informed him that it contained a flaw. To prove his point he had the diamond fastened to the head of a fighting ram, while another ram had a good diamond on its skull. In the fight the flawed diamond broke in two. I am told by experts that diamonds, though the hardest of substances, are quite brittle, and that it is not advisable to test your diamond if you have one by hitting it with a hammer. However that may be, the Emperor was so pleased that he released the Raja and other chiefs imprisoned with him.

During the remaining period of Muhammadan rule a fairly large number of Muhammadans moved into Chota Nagpur, and the Rajas introduced numbers of Hindu settlers, some of whom were given grants of villages. Some of these settlers were also required to render military service when necessary. In 1765, on the grant of the Dewani of Bengal, Bihar and Orissa to the East India Company, Chota Nagpur passed to the British as part of the *Subah* of Bihar, but it was not until six or seven years later that any attempt at direct government was made. Capt. Camac had entered Palamau to re-instate a chief, and the Raja of



Nagpur (as Chota Nagpur was then called), who was in difficulties with the Kols on his southern border and also with the Raja of Ramgarh, went to visit Capt. Camac and offered his allegiance and his aid against the Mahrattas.

The British had a good deal of trouble in asserting their authority, collecting their revenue, and introducing law and order, for a good many years after this. South Manbhum was particularly troublesome. But the most serious event in the first half of the 19th century was the rising of the Kols in 1831-2. The immediate cause of this outbreak was the oppression of the aborigines by the non-aboriginal *thikadars*, or farmers of rents, who had been put in charge of villages by the Raja over the heads of the hereditary headmen. There were other evils such as forced labour, wrongful dispossession of land and so on. The trouble started in Porahat in Singhbhum and in the neighbouring part of the Ranchi district. The Hos and Mundas were joined by the Oraons, and many houses of the *dikku* (non-aboriginal) landlords were burnt and a number of people killed. The rising was suppressed with a good deal of trouble by Captain Wilkinson, who had several hundred troops at his disposal. He seems to have behaved with humanity and to have earned the respect and friendship of the Mundas, especially in South Khunti, the heart of the Munda country.

The rising led to some good results. There were administrative reforms, and it was decided to create the South West Frontier agency, with its headquarters or near Ranchi. The new agency included the whole of Chota Nagpur and some of the adjoining Feudatory States (then called Tributary Mahals). Subdivisions of the agency were placed under officers at Purulia and Hazaribagh, as well as at Ranchi or Lohardaga (later Ranchi only). New courts were established and a more efficient police system was set up but it was not until 1861 that a regular constabulary was created. Ranchi did not escape the troubles of 1857, and the visitor can still see a cannon-ball stuck in the tower of the Lutheran Church. There was at that time a battalion—the Ramgarh battalion

—stationed at Ranchi. The disturbances ended, so far as Chota Nagpur was concerned, with the battle which was fought near Chatra in the district of Hazaribagh.

There was a good deal of agrarian unrest in Chota Nagpur, especially the Ranchi district, in the second half of the 19th century. The demarcating and recording of many of the privileged land-tenures of the Mundas and Oraons did some good, but it became more and more obvious that nothing short of a regular survey of agricultural holdings, with the preparation of a record of rights in land, would bring peace to the country-side. The work was undertaken in 1902 and was completed six years later. A few years before the operations started, in 1895, the Birsa rising had taken place. Birsa set himself up as the leader of a new religion—a mixture of Christianity and Hinduism (he was himself a Christian) and many people flocked to join him. There was great excitement in the Munda country, for Birsa proclaimed that the independent Munda Raj had come. He was arrested and released after a short time and nothing was heard of him for two or three years. In 1899 he reappeared and this time there were many cases of murder and arson by his followers. In the end troops had to be called out and there was a fight at Dumari hill where followers of Birsa had assembled. The troops had to use their rifles and a number of the followers were killed or wounded. Birsa was again imprisoned and died of cholera in jail.

There is no doubt that the real reasons for the outbreak were the grievances of the aborigines about their land—their treatment by the small landlords and farmers of rent, and injustices committed by judicial and revenue officers who did not understand the customary laws of the people. In former times the aborigines, especially the Munda tribes, who love quiet and seclusion and freedom from interference by outsiders, took refuge in wholesale emigration to a new and virgin country, where they could found villages anew in clearings in the primeval forest. They were like the Boers who trekked northwards before the advancing tide of gold-seekers and merchants; or like the 'grave Tyrian trader' who 'Day and night held on indignantly



o'er the blue Midland waters with the gale ' fleeing from the intruders on his ancient home. So the Mundas have spread out from time to time into the primeval forests of south Ranchi and Manbhum. Their brothers the Hos moved still farther south into Singhbhum and the States, and the Santals spread over the forest country of the Santal Parganas. Like the Scholar Gypsy they ' fly our paths, our feverish contact fly. ' But in our day there is no such remedy, for there is no undeveloped country or virgin forest to which they can flee; and in the face of oppression by foreign landlords, money-lenders and land-grabbers, in despair of getting justice through the machinery of the law, they were driven, as in Birsa's day, and as in the Santal rising of 1856, to take the law into their own hands.

The survey and settlement, and the passing of the special land tenancy law—the Chota Nagpur Tenancy Act of 1908—brought at last a measure of agrarian peace to the country. Similar settlement operations were carried out in all the districts of Chota Nagpur, and of recent years the maps and records have been revised in Ranchi and parts of Singhbhum.

One of the objects of this first settlement of the whole district was to make an authoritative record of the ancestral lands of the aboriginals, and of the villages where the ancient land-tenure system of the Mundas still survived, and it was successfully accomplished. In the Revision Settlement of 1927-34 great care was taken to see that no further breaking down of the system, since the first record was made, should be recognised. The ancient land-tenure system, which once probably covered a great part of the district of Ranchi, is now confined to in its pure form to 156 villages, all in the south-east of the district in the Khunti subdivision, and in only 59 of these does the hereditary Manki still perform his functions. Apart from these intact villages of the *Mundari Khunthattidars*, as the descendants of the Munda founders of the villages are called, the Mundas and Oraons still retain a considerable part of their ancestral lands, which have been carefully recorded in the various settlements and to which special privileges attach.

## CHAPTER XXV

### ABORIGINAL CUSTOMS

*The Mundas—the Munda Land System—the Oraons—  
Munda Religion—Oraon Religion—the Bachelors’  
Dormitory—the Dancing-floor—Festivals*

THE Munda country is in the south of the Ranchi district, and the Khunti subdivision, which was created in 1905 mainly as a Munda subdivision, is their chief stronghold. The south west corner of this subdivision, where, as we have seen, the ancient land-tenure system of the Mundas still survives, is the tract known as the Mankipatti. The Manki is the head of a group of villages, each of which has a headman called the *Munda* (*par excellence*). In a Munda village which has retained its old economy the land belongs to the direct descendants of the founders of the village—the prisoners who cleared the primeval jungle. Each of these descendants pays his share of the quit-rent or tribute due from the village to the headman, who passes it on to the *Manki*, who in turn pays it to the superior landlord.

The Mundas are divided into a number of exogamous clans called *kilis*. The *kilis* are totemistic, their names being taken from animals or natural objects such as trees. Each *kili* has a common burial ground, where the bones of the ancestors are kept under stone burial slabs—the *sasandiri* of the clan. These stones are a conspicuous feature near Munda villages, and are important as records of rights in land, for any man who claims a share in the ancestral lands of the clan must show that the bones of his ancestors were buried under the *sasandiri* of the clan. The religious head of the village is the *Pahan*, who also presides over the *panchayat*, or committee of village elders which decides disputes. In the western part of the Munda



territory, where the office of *Manki* has disappeared, the group of villages (*parha*) always consists of people of the same *kili*, and there is a committee of elders of the group to decide disputes and matters of more than village importance. But in the *Mankipatti* the villages in the group need not necessarily consist of people of the same *kili*.

The Oraons, like the Mundas, are divided into a number of clans or *gotras*. There are many resemblances between the two races, but the Oraons are much less conservative and reserved than the Mundas. Interesting accounts of the customs of the two races can be read in the works of the late Rai Bahadur Sarat Chandra Roy, and in the writings of Col. Dalton. Oraon youths have a jaunty appearance, with their hair tied in a knot behind, and a small mirror stuck in it, and ornaments in their ears. Col. Dalton describes the widespread custom of friendships between two girls. They swear eternal friendship at a little ceremony, at which other girls of the village are present, and in which they place flowers in each other's hair. When a young man is courting a girl the most infallible indication that he is in earnest is, according to Col. Dalton, when he presents her with a great delicacy, a dish of fried mice.

The Oraons call themselves *Khurukh*, and another name which is commonly applied to them in many parts of India where they have settled, or where they have gone in search of work, is *Dhangar*. The headman of an Oraon village is called the *Mahto*, and the official who looks after the more spiritual affairs is the *Pahan*. If the man who originally cleared the jungle from the site which is now the village happened to be a Munda, the Oraon community of the village will often have a Munda as their headman, as he will in their view be better able to deal with the village gods.

The principal features of the Munda religion are the worship of Sing Bonga—the sun-god and supreme being—and ancestor worship. The spirits of the ancestors are known as the *ora-bongako*—the household gods. The Mundas offer daily worship to these gods of the house in the form of offerings of a few grains of rice and drops of



Photo: Dalton's Descriptive Ethnology of Bengal  
Juang girls (the "People of the Leaves")





*The Hundru falls in Summer*

water or beer. The presence of the spirits of the ancestors is very real to the Mundas, and there is no doubt that they really feel that they are constantly with them in the house. A few days after a man dies, his spirit is brought from the grave by an elaborate ceremony, to live in the house which was his during his lifetime. To the Mundas, as to the ancient Greeks, there are gods or spirits in many natural objects, such as mountain-peaks, waterfalls and trees.

The Oraons, like the Mundas, worship a supreme being and the spirits of their ancestors. The help of the ancestors is invoked in any grave trouble, and to protect a newly married couple or a newly born child. Human sacrifice was once practised among the tribes, and there is still a superstition among the Oraons that one of the fierce spirits of the village requires the sacrifice of a boy or girl once in a generation. Belief in witchcraft is still very strong, and murders of witches still occasionally occur. As in other countries the person suspected of being a witch is usually an ugly old woman, and sometimes the old woman is quite ready to admit, or rather claim, that she possesses the powers of witchcraft.

In the western parts of the Khunti sub-division—the Panch Parganas—and to a less extent in other parts of the district, many of the Mundas have adopted the Hindu religion, their favourite deity being Mahadeo. They also worship Devi Mai (Sakti) and other deities. In most of these Hinduised villages the *Pahan* retains his authority, and the village gods are still worshipped.

A fairly common institution among the aboriginal tribes is the bachelors' dormitory. Among the Oraons it is known as the *Dhumkuria* and the same name is used by the hunting tribe called the Birhors. A boy starts sleeping in the *Dhumkuria* from about the age of 10, after curious initiation ceremonies. In some Oraon villages there is also a maidens' dormitory, presided over by an elderly widow, often, it is rumoured, a sound sleeper. Among the Mundas the custom is not so common, but in some villages the boys sleep in a spare hut belonging to one of the villagers, and the girls in the house of a childless couple. Originally



the arrangement was probably in the interests of morality. Indeed, as Sarat Chandra Roy points out, irregular conduct among young man and girls in the village was believed, among the Birhors, to bring bad luck in hunting. But there is no doubt that the institution leads to promiscuity nowadays, and that is one of the reasons why it is dying out. Liaisons between boys and girls, where the institution survives, are very common. Among the Birhors, according to S. C. Roy, it is considered wrong for a boy to go with some-one else's girl, 'but although such a breach of etiquette (!) is not punished with a fine, the aggrieved boy has the support of his fellows when he seeks to retaliate by himself sleeping with the recognised sweetheart of the offending boy.'

All the aboriginal tribes are very fond of dancing. The numerous festivals are the occasion for communal dances. Most villages have an *akhra* or dancing floor, usually a cleared space of hard ground under a spreading tree in the village. There are often rude stone seats for the old people and other spectators. The *akhra* is also used among the Mundas for the meetings of the elders.

The *akhras* are sometimes the scene of dancing meets (*jatras*), to which the people from many neighbouring villages come. On these occasions and on other important days the huge *jatra* flags of the Oraon villages are brought out. Each village, or sometimes group of villages, has its own distinctive flag (in origin these are the banners of the *Parha* or Oraon group of villages). The processions with the flags form a colourful and brilliant spectacle. In some of the dances the women and girls link arms and sing and dance in a precise syncopated time to the drums and caperings of the local dance-leaders. In other dances there are separate lines of women and young men, and in some the men and women join in forming the lines. There are many elaborate dances, each appropriate to its occasion. Even to European ears, which are not always attuned to eastern music, there is something very attractive about the songs of the aboriginals. The girls can often be heard singing rather plaintive songs as they go homewards from their work or from the market.

One of the dancing festivals is called the Maghi Parob among the Hos, and has its counterpart among other tribes. There is a great deal of license on this occasion, and Dr. Dalton remarks that

they (the Hos) have a strange notion that men and women are at this period—when the granaries are full of grain and the people (to use their own expression) with devilry—so over-charged with vicious propensities that it is absolutely necessary for them to let off steam by allowing for a time full vent to their passions.

The festival among the Hos used to take place on different days in different villages, so that the festivities went on for weeks or until the celebrator had had enough. Now-a-days the people are more restrained than in the days of which Col. Dalton wrote.

I do not want to give the impression, by mentioning occasional divergences from the straight and narrow path, that the aboriginals are immoral. On the contrary, their standards of post-marital morality and fidelity are probably a good deal higher than in some races which claim to be more civilised. The status of women is high. Wives are partners and companions to their husbands. It is even whispered that henpecked husbands are not uncommon among the tribesmen. Among the Hos late marriage is common, and the number of unmarried women is abnormally large; this is due to the bride-price customarily demanded by the bride's father. It is somewhat surprising to learn that the bride usually backs up her father in his demand, probably because of a sound instinct that a handsome bride-price will enhance the respect in which she will be held after marriage by her husband as well as by her friends.

The Mundas have the pleasant custom of preserving somewhere within the village boundaries, often near a stream, a small block of the ancient forest, which is treated as a sacred grove, and in which the village gods are believed to live. These groves are the only temples known to the Mundas.



## CHAPTER XXVI

### ROUND ABOUT RANCHI

*Ranchi Town—The Missions—Kanke Mental Hospital—Beauty Spots near Ranchi—Ramgarh—Man-eaters of West Ranchi—Netarhat—Shooting on the Plateau*

THE town of Ranchi stands at a height of 2130 feet above sea level. It is a long straggling town, and has greatly expanded of recent years. It is the Summer headquarters of the government of Bihar. There are many tanks or lakes in or near the town, the finest of them being the Ranchi Lake—with the curiously symmetrical Ranchi Hill at its northern end—which was excavated by the Agent, Col. Ousely, about 1842. The summer-house which that officer erected on the top of the hill has since been annexed by the local people as a shrine of Mahadeo. Another conspicuous hill on the north-east of the town is that known as Tagore Hill, from a house belonging to that family on the hillside. This hill is crowned by a small but graceful temple-like structure, which is at present neglected and is endangered by the roots of a *pipal* tree near the pinnacle.

The southern suburb of Ranchi—Doranda—was a military cantonment until 1905. There are few buildings of historical interest there or elsewhere in the town. The oldest site is the fort at Chutia, an eastern suburb of the town, where there are the remains of an old fort and residence of the ancestors of the Maharajas of Chota Nagpur, with a graceful temple. The large building which now forms the court of the Judicial Commissioner and the office of the Commissioner of Chota Nagpur was built as the private residence of the brother of the Col. Ousely already mentioned and a tragic story attaches to it. The grounds originally covered 3 square miles—most of it now built over. The Agent's brother got into financial diffi-

culties over the building and the purchase of the land, and embezzled government money. Col. Ousely was unable to bear the disgrace and committed suicide, and his brother lost his reason.

The other conspicuous buildings in the town are Government House, a very well designed building completed in 1932, which replaced the temporary building used by the Governors during the Ranchi season from 1912 until that year. The temporary building, with its splendid ball-room and Durbar hall, was the scene of many dances and entertainments for the troops during the second world war, when it was known as Audrey House, after Lady Rutherford, wife of the then Governor.

We may here give a few facts about the Christian Missions which work in Chota Nagpur and have their headquarters in Ranchi, and some of the great names associated with them. The three principal missions are the Lutheran mission, which was the first in the field, in 1884; the Anglican mission (the S.P.G.) which started work in 1869, after a split in the Lutheran mission; and the Roman Catholics, who first began their work in the Ranchi area in 1874. All the missions have done most valuable and devoted work in the fields of medicine and education, as well as in more directly religious activities.

Among the Lutherans the Rev. Dr. Nottrott was a great figure in the Ranchi district. The first Anglican bishop of Chota Nagpur was the Rev. J. C. Whitley, who worked with energy and devotion until his death in 1904. His equally famous nephew and successor was Foss Westcott, who later became Metropolitan of India. A man of great energy and understanding, he never spared himself in the interests of his diocese, and he did much for education and the training of teachers. Foss Westcott is still with us, and still working for his beloved Chota Nagpur. The name of Kenneth Kennedy, doctor and missionary, is also remembered with affection, especially in the Munda country. The Roman Catholic mission has flourishing stations in many remote parts of the Ranchi district and in Palamau. One of their great names is that of the Rev. Father Lievens, S. J., whose work was mainly among the



Oraons. Another very well-known name is that of Father J. B. Hoffmann, who was one of those who urged the passing of the Chota Nagpur Tenancy Act, and helped in its drafting. He compiled the monumental *Encyclopedia Mundarica* at which he worked for the greater part of his life. One of the great achievements of the Roman Catholic Mission was the building up of co-operative societies, which enable the aboriginals to take loans for their cultivations without having to borrow from money-lenders on ruinous terms. These societies were built up on a sound basis, and stood firm in the slump when even government-sponsored banks crashed all over the country.

Among other well-known missions and famous names are those of the United Free Church of Scotland at Pokhuria in the Dhanbad subdivision, where the name of Dr. Campbell is remembered with affection; and the branch of the same mission at Bamra in Monghyr, to which reference is made in the chapter on that district.

The church of the Lutherans in Ranchi town stands near the main road through the town. The English church is the stately brick edifice of St. Paul's Cathedral, consecrated in 1873, and built entirely from public subscriptions. One of those mainly responsible for the enterprise was Col. Dalton, one of the best-known names among the administrators of Chota Nagpur, who himself gave Rs. 3,000. The Roman Catholic Cathedral is also a large and imposing building, completed in 1909. Many excellent schools and hospitals have been founded and are run by the Missions, in Ranchi as in other parts of Chota Nagpur, and the large *sadar* hospital at Ranchi is run, under the Civil Surgeon, by the Ursuline nuns.

Many people will be interested in the work done by the Ursuline Convent Lace and Embroidery Work-Room, and the S. P. G. Lace and Needle-work School. The former specialises in the making of Brussels lace and many other kinds of lace, and the work is of a very high standard and is in great demand. The workers are all poor aboriginal women and girls, who supplement the family income by working here. Fine embroidery is also done in the work-room. On my last visit the nun in charge called up one

of the women who started work here as a girl when the work-room was opened in 1906. She is still the most skilful of all the lace-workers. The average number of workers is about 170.

The S. P. G. Lace and Needlework School is not making much lace at the present time, largely owing to the difficulty of getting materials. It was opened in 1910 and there are about ninety women and girls working. The school specialises in embroidery and fine needlework, and the workmanship is outstanding. It is well-known for very fine work in the preparation of trousseaux and babies' clothes, and for embroidered tea-cloths and many other products. Payment to the workers is made according to a scale which shows the work-value of each type of article produced. The system is most successful, and is an encouragement to the women to be industrious and to become more and more skilled.

Both of these institutions are well worthy of a visit, especially by people who admire fine hand-work. They have done a great deal of good among poor young girls and among the wives of poor men. They give them a skilled occupation, raise their self-respect and standards, and give a welcome addition to the earnings of husband or father.

Six miles north of Ranchi is the Kanke Mental Hospital, the largest in Eastern India. There is a separate hospital for European patients and others who live in European style—the only one of its kind in India. There are normally about 1,300 patients in the Indian hospital and 250 in the European. The name which will always be associated with the Mental Hospital is that of the late Lt.-Col. O. A. R. Berkeley Hill, an alienist of international repute, and a well-known personality in the Ranchi area for many years. He was in charge of the European Mental Hospital from 1919, a year after its opening, until 1934. He built up a system of treatment on the most modern lines, based on a deep understanding of the problems of the individual, and on patience and sympathy. The hospital stands in healthy and pleasant surroundings with many flowering trees and shady avenues.

There is very little forest left in the neighbourhood of



Ranchi, unlike Hazaribagh, where there is extensive forest within a few miles of the town. There are, however, excellent roads radiating from Ranchi, and the best way to deal with the places of scenic beauty round about the town will be to take each of these roads separately.

The eastward road leads to Purulia, 74 miles away, and 11 miles short of Purulia the road to Dhanbad takes off. Visitors who come to Ranchi from Calcutta by road usually take this route, turning off the Grand Trunk Road at Gobindpur and then passing through Dhanbad and Chas to the Purulia Road. The alternative way, *via* Bagodar and Hazaribagh, is about 36 miles farther. From Ranchi eastwards for about 18 miles the road runs along the level top of the plateau. Six miles out of Ranchi an unmetalled road takes off to the right to the reserved forests of Horhap, the only government reserved forests in the Ranchi district, though there are fairly extensive areas of 'protected forest' in the remoter parts of the district. The Horhap forests harbour leopards and bears, as well as jungle-fowl and peafowl, and a very occasional tiger.

At Angara, a village 14 miles from Ranchi, the turning to the north is the way to the Hundru falls, and except after heavy rain one can motor 13 miles to within a short distance of the falls. It is here that the Subarnarekha river — 'the thread of gold' — leaps over the edge of the plateau in a fall of 320 feet. This is not all a sheer drop, except in the rains, when the sight and sound of this tremendous waterfall, one of the world's highest, are awe-inspiring. The pools at the base of the fall are a favourite picnic and bathing-spot in the dry season, but it is a steep scramble to the bottom and up again. The scenery along the gorge of the Subarnarekha is very fine. After passing Angara the road begins to drop down the long *ghat* as it leaves the Ranchi plateau. Near the 20th mile from Ranchi a road to the right takes us to the top of another escarpment (3 miles from the main road) where a tributary of the Subarnarekha pitches over a series of sheer cliffs to form the Jonha falls. The climb down to the base of these falls is much shorter and less steep than at Hundru. This also is a favourite spot for picnicking and bathing, and the



*The load of paddy seedings*



*Ploughing in Chota Nagpur*

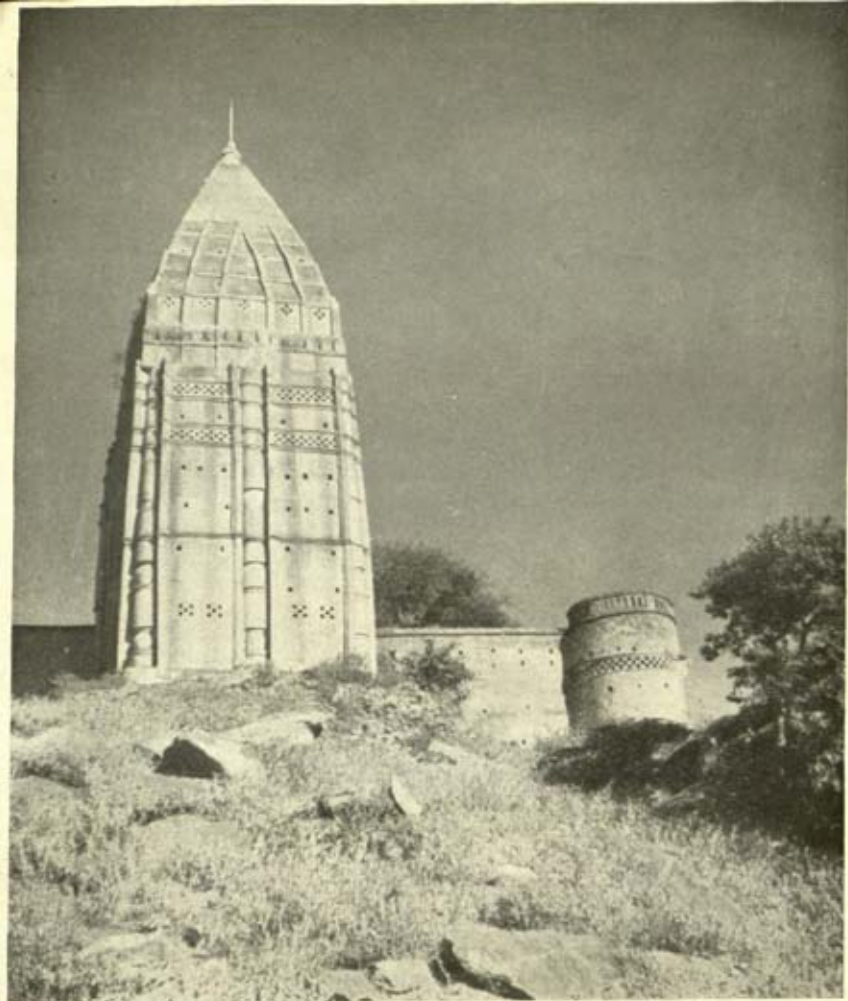




*Oraon girls transplanting paddy*



*The dancing floor, with children sitting on the old men's seats*



*The temple of Jagernath near Ranchi*





*The Ranchi lake*

scenery around the Jonha falls, and indeed all the way down the *ghat* as far as Silli, is most picturesque.

The road which leads south from Ranchi is an important highway to Khunti, Chakradharpur on the main line of the B.N.R., Chaibasa and Jamshedpur. This road also links up with the road from Orissa through Keonjhar. There is nothing very striking about the scenery between Ranchi and Bandgaon. It is the typical pleasant undulating country of the plateau, with patches of forest and blocks of hills here and there. The edge of the plateau is near Bandgaon, just over 40 miles from Ranchi, and not far from the top of the *ghat* are the Hirni falls, to the east of the road in grand surroundings. The slope where the Chaibasa road drops down from the plateau is much steeper than those on the other roads leading out of Ranchi, and the scenery is perhaps the finest on any of the roads. For many miles the traveller passes through dense reserved forests, before reaching the final drop down to the Singhbhum plain by a series of hair-pin bends. In the forests a few miles to the west of the road there are tigers, wild elephants and sometimes bison.

The road due north from Ranchi takes us to the edge of the plateau after a run of 20 miles and we then drop down by a fairly easy gradient to the valley of Ramgarh. On the way down really magnificent views are obtained of the plains below, the hills of south east Hazaribagh, and the towering mass of Parasnath in the background. Ramgarh was once the seat of the Rajas of that name, but after their departure for a new headquarters many generations ago the place became a sleepy village. It obtained a little vicarious importance with the opening of two railways, one on each side of it, the railway from Gomoh to Ranchi Road Station, and the Central India Coalfields Railway from Muri which passes just to the south of Ramgarh through Barkakhana. Ramgarh achieved fame by the holding of the 53rd Session of the Indian National Congress there in 1940. Of its subsequent history some account is given in the chapter on Hazaribagh.

The fourth of the great roads out of Ranchi is the west road—the road to Gumla, Daltonganj and Netarhat. For



the first 50 miles or so the road passes through typical rolling country of Chota Nagpur with its sparsely cultivated uplands and rice-fields in the valleys. Steep hills rise suddenly from the plain here and there and villages under sheltering trees on the higher ground dot the landscape. We pass through Kuru (36 miles) where the road turns off towards Daltonganj, and through Lohardaga, a flourishing country town, the terminus of the metre-gauge railway from Ranchi. From the hills north and west of Lohardaga comes the bauxite which is the raw material of the growing aluminium industry. The bauxite is sent down by rail to the factory at Muri, where it passes through complicated chemical processes, and the resultant product is sent to Travancore for conversion into aluminium ingots. These hills near Lohardaga are an outlier of the *pats*—the flat-topped, steep-sided hills which form the third and highest step of the great Chota Nagpur plateau. We shall see the perfect development of the *pats* when we reach the top of the winding road to Netarhat.

At Ghaghra, 70 miles from Ranchi, we take the road to the right. The main road to Gumla and Jashpurnagar goes straight on to the South, skirting ranges of hills which have an evil reputation for man-eating tigers. Some of the most dreadful man-eaters in the annals of the Province had their beat in these hills. When I was touring among the villages in the course of my work as Settlement Officer I often found pathetic reminders of their depredations. Clearings in the forest, with fields and gardens, would be found abandoned and giving way to the returning jungle, while the little house slowly crumbled to ruin; the pioneer had fallen a victim to the man-eater. Sometimes roads through or near the forests were practically closed to traffic for months when some cunning tiger had found an easy way of securing his human prey, by lying in wait behind bushes near the road and pouncing on the unfortunate wayfarer. Often when I visited villages near a hillside a bereaved man or woman would point out to me a tree or field where a wife or son had been seized and carried off. The attacks were usually in the evening, but sometimes in the middle of the day. The tigers were not, as is some-

times asserted of man-eaters in general, old and decrepit or injured animals, unable any longer to catch their normal prey. They were generally animals in the prime of life and strength. It was only a few miles from Ghaghra, where we turn off to Netarhat, that a young male tiger in the pride of this strength emerged from the forest into a field where a party of women was working, and killed three. He then selected one of the victims and carried her off into the forest.

The reason why the tigers in this locality are generally man-eaters is, probably, that they have migrated westwards from the dense forests of Surguja and Jashpur. Those forests are well stocked with game—deer and wild pig—the natural food of the tiger. But in the forests to the west of Gumla there is hardly any game left, and the tigers must take to killing cattle, a practice which sooner or later brings them into close contact with a human being. The tiger finds man easy to kill ; his natural respect for, or fear of, the species becomes faint. We may assume that he finds human flesh to his liking. Having taken to man-eating the tiger seems to become endowed with extraordinary cunning, and the usual methods of hunting tigers are often useless in his case. In the end he usually meets his fate by a poisoned arrow, let off from a fixed bow by the side of a jungle path, by means of a string stretched across the path. It is hard for us, who live in cities, or in countries where the great carnivora are unknown, to realise the terror which a determined man-eating tiger can arouse in the inhabitants of the country in which he operates. Only in folk-lore stories of dragons, handed down from the earliest dawn, do we in western countries feel uneasily a trace of the terror inspired by unknown monsters of the past. Fortunately the tigers of Netarhat and the surrounding forests, where deer and pig are plentiful, are hardly ever man-eaters.

Westwards from Ghaghra, we come to a most attractive stretch of road between Adar and Bishnupur. Here the road passes between two great hill-ranges, and is crossed by several streams with wooded banks, the haunt of jungle-fowl. At Bishnupur is a fine bungalow, with well



laid-out gardens, belonging to the Chota Nagpur Raj. In front of us now is the main range of Netarhat and Pakripat, with its forest-clad sides and its level summit, stretching for 15 miles or more at a height of over 3,500 feet. A mile or two before reaching the base of the range we pass the turning to the north which leads by forest roads to Garu, Rud and other famous shooting places in the Palamau reserved forests, and the fort of Palamau. At the base of the hill we enter dense forest and for the rest of the 10 miles to the top we pass through continuous forest. There are many hair-pin bends, and careful driving is called for. A few miles from the top we pass the turning to the south which leads to Netarhat's sister plateau, Pakripat. On that plateau one can walk or motor for miles on the flat top of a wide ridge, grass-covered for the most part, with patches of cultivation and spinneys of wind-blown trees. On both sides of the ridge the steep slopes are covered with *sal*-forest, over which one looks down to the cultivated plain 1500 feet below. It is great country for riding, if the visitor can make the necessary elaborate arrangements for getting his horses there, but the rider must beware of the boulders hidden in the tall grass, and worse still the holes made by bears.

The Netarhat plateau is of much the same character as Pakripat, but the planting of numerous large groves of pine trees, and of groups of eucalyptus and other trees, has enhanced the park-like aspect of the wide and rolling plateau. Many of the trees were planted 25 years ago or more, and are now well-grown. Round the edges of the plateau is the vast *sal*-forest and there is a network of motorable forest roads which enable the visitor to motor about these shady reserved forests. The energetic who get up an hour before dawn and motor slowly along the forest roads have an excellent chance of seeing *sambhar* and *chital* deer, wild pig, and if they are lucky a leopard or even a tiger, returning from his nocturnal hunting to the cave or other secluded place where he will spend the day. At certain times of the year (generally in the summer) the early riser may even be lucky enough to see a small herd of bison, those splendid creatures, standing up

to 18 hands at the shoulder, and with short and massive horns, which now survive, in the province of Bihar, only here in the forests near Netarhat, and in a few places in Singhbhum.

There are two bathing pools which visitors may use—one on the plateau and one in the forest on the road down to the waterfall. Permission to use the forest pool should be obtained from the forest ranger at Marwai on the way up. If information can be given in advance arrangements are made by the forest authorities to insert a wall of planks which increases the area and depth of the pool.

The visitor to Netarhat must take everything, even milk and vegetables, with him. Water is brought—from a considerable distance—by the servants at the bungalows, and should be boiled before use. There are two large P.W.D. bungalows with 4 bed-rooms each and a dining-room, and there are also district board and forest bungalows. There is a country house called the 'Chalet' which is used by the Governor of Bihar when he comes up here for a holiday. A former Governor, Sir Edward Gait, was very much attached to Netarhat, and was mainly responsible for developing it; one of the vantage points on the edge of the escarpment, from which a lovely view can be had of the valley of the North Koel river as it winds through dense forests, was called in his time 'Heaven's Gate' but is now more usually known as 'Gait's Heaven'. Another such vantage point, farther in the forest, is known as Magnolia Point.

Enough has been said to make it clear that visitors who want to stay a night or longer at Netarhat must make fairly elaborate preparations beforehand. For permission to occupy rooms in the P.W.D. bungalows application should be made well in advance to the Deputy Commissioner of Ranchi.

On some of his journeys up to Netarhat Sir Edward Gait scattered handfuls of the seed of the yellow cosmos near the road. It has spread all along the road-sides and in the open spaces near the forest, and when the plants are in flower after the rains the stretches of waving orange flowers are a charming sight.



For the sportsman there is good snipe shooting all over the Ranchi plateau wherever there are wide stretches of wet paddy land. Snipe are shot as early as August, but the best period is later in the season after the rice has been cut, in December, January and February. Grey Partridge are fairly common wherever there is suitable cover, but jungle-fowl and pea-fowl are found only where there is fairly extensive tree forest. For big game the reserved forests are the best places, and those who wish to try their hand at such game should apply for permission to shoot in a particular forest block to the Divisional Forest Officer of the district, or direct to the office of the Conservator of Forests, Ranchi (*Vide* Appendix 3).

Game sanctuaries have been established by the Forest Dept. in Palamau and Singhbhum, and much of the forest near Netarhat is now a sanctuary. It is to be hoped that the Government of Bihar will see its way to convert the whole of this Netarhat area into a national park, for, as may be gathered from the brief description given earlier, it is an ideal site for such a purpose.

## CHAPTER XXVII

### HAZARIBAGH

*The New Military Road—Other Roads—Parasnath Mountain—Kaluha Hill—Lugu Hill—Ramgarh—Kodarma—the Mica Industry*

THE district of Hazaribagh is, from the points of view of climate and scenic beauty, perhaps the most attractive in the province. The town itself is a quiet back-water, thirty miles from the nearest railway station—at Ranchi Road, Hazaribagh Road Railway Station on the Grand Chord Line being about ten miles farther. This circumstance has no doubt helped to preserve its atmosphere of an old-world *mofassil* (rural) station ; but Hazaribagh may, I think, look forward to a great future as a health-resort for the people of the plains of Bengal and Bihar. There is as yet no public electric supply, but that deficiency will no doubt soon be remedied. Hazaribagh has long been popular with Bengalis, many of whom have been settled there for generations. It takes its name from the small villages of Okni and Hazari—shown on old maps as Ocunhazry. The last syllable of its name probably originated in a mango-grove (*bagh*) which formed a camping-ground for troops and travellers marching along the ' new military road ' from Calcutta to Benares, constructed in 1782 and following years. The Dublin Mission has its headquarters here, with the well-known St. Columba's College and the women's hospital. A few miles out of Hazaribagh, below the lofty hill of Sitagarh, is the Roman Catholic seminary, which possesses a fine herd of cattle and an agricultural farm run on scientific lines.

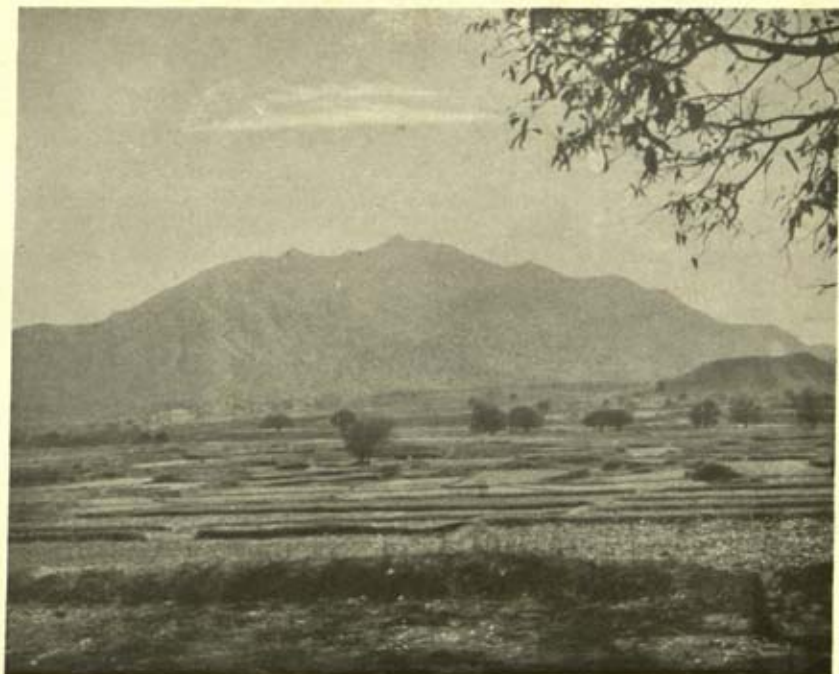
This ' new military road ' was the predecessor of the Grand Trunk Road in this province. It passed through



Chas in Manbhum and thence through wild country to Hazaribagh. Thence it ran westwards through the hills and forests of Kathkamsandi, infested with wild animals, and joined the present Grand Trunk Road near Sherghati. On suitable hills near the road signalling towers were built; the semaphore system was used, the signalling arms being long beams of wood. Several of these towers can still be seen, one of the best-preserved being that on the small hill not far from Singhani, and others are, I believe, still standing, hidden in the jungle to the south-east, where the military road once ran; though all trace of the road in that forest country has long since disappeared. The town became a cantonment in 1790, the Ramgarh battalion having been raised ten years before, and with one period of eclipse, the cantonment flourished until 1884. A beneficial result of this military occupation was the laying out of a large part of the town according to a regular plan. This spacious part of the town is known as Boddam Bazar, after the officer who laid it out (often corrupted to 'Bottom').

The environs of Hazaribagh are more attractive than those of her sister city on the plateau—Ranchi. There are picturesque hills and forests on all sides, within a few miles of the town. The forests have, unfortunately, sadly deteriorated in recent years, but the scenery is still very fine. Perhaps the best way to give the visitor an idea of the district and its scenery and places of interest will be, as we did at Ranchi, to drive out along the various roads which radiate from the town of Hazaribagh.

The west road out of the town takes us to Chatra *via* Lepo and Simaria, the total distance to Chatra being 40 miles. The road is for the most part unmetalled, but the gravel and *kankar* of which it is made forms a smooth and firm surface under any but the worst conditions. The present road to Chatra through Lepo takes us through a good deal of forest country, and leopards and even tigers are sometimes seen in the evening or at night along this road. But, as elsewhere in the district, most of the forest which even a few years ago added to the beauty of the scenery has been destroyed, and too often an infertile



*Parashnath mountain (4480 feet) from the Grand Trunk Road*





wilderness has taken its place. The only tall forest left is in the Ramgarh Raj forest reserves.

Just before the second world war the writer was motor-ing after dark between Hazaribagh and Lepo. It had been a stormy evening, with thunder rolling in the hills and heavy showers of rain, but now the sky had cleared and the road was rapidly drying in the warm night wind. No doubt the undergrowth in the forest was still wet, and that induced a family of leopards to come out and play on the sandy road in the starlight. There they were, lit up by my headlights, the old mother and three fat cubs, rolling and wrestling on the road. I slowed down to prolong the sight and to avoid running over one of them. Not until I was close to them did the mother glide into the forest followed by her offspring.

Chatra was once an important town, the headquarters of the district of Ramgarh. With Sherghati it shared that honour until Hazaribagh became a district headquarters in 1834. Chatra is now but a shadow of what it was in those days. It has been a subdivisional headquarters since 1914, but most of its prosperity has vanished. Remains of old barracks, mosques and other buildings are now half-hidden in the jungle. Tigers come close to the town in their nightly wanderings, and a mile or two from the S.D.O.'s house there is still good jungle-fowl shooting to be had. The road goes on north-eastwards from Chatra to join the Grand Trunk Road at Chauparan, thirty-one miles away.

Near the southern border of Gaya district is a rather inaccessible place of pilgrimage known as Kaluha hill, where remains of ancient Jain temples and other structures can be seen.

There is still a rough road, motorable in the dry weather, for ten miles or so west of Hazaribagh on the line of the military road. Beyond that the road has disintegrated, except for old culverts and bridges, built of solid masonry, which can still be seen in the forest clinging to the sides of the hills. A few miles west of Katkamsandi is the hot spring of Duari, close to the Mohani river where it crosses the road.

The road from Hazaribagh to the south is the main road to Ramgarh and Ranchi. The scenery along this road is very



fine, though here also the forest has been devastated by ruthless cutting. Between Mandu and Ramgarh, to the east towers the great sandstone mass of Lugu hill, 3,203 feet high. The northern face rises sheer to a height of 2,200 feet above the Bokaro river at its foot. The steepness of its sides, especially near the summit, make it virtually unclimbable except at a few points, and according to local legend, it is haunted by a fiend who carries off young girls who venture near the summit. Sometimes the girls reappear years afterwards, with no memory of the place of their captivity. Across the Bokaro rises the cliff of Jilinga hill. The railway from Gomoh through the Bokaro coal-field to Ranchi Road passes along the valley of the Bokaro between these great forest-clad cliffs.

In the valley of the Damodar, west of Ramgarh, are situated some of the great coal-fields of India, of which mention is made in Chapter XXXIII. It first came into prominence in 1938 when it was selected as the venue for the All India Congress Session of that year. A plaster copy of one of Asoka's columns with lion capital marks the site of the temporary city which was erected to house the delegates and guests. Later, the site was used for the purposes of a camp for Italian prisoners of war, and at a still later stage in the second world war, this was the training ground for large numbers of young Chinese soldiers under their American instructors. Ramgarh has, in all probability, a great future before it, situated as it is on the Damodar river, and on the main arterial road from the north to the south of the Province, and close to the great coalfields and two railway lines.

A mile or two south of Ramgarh the road begins to climb the side of the plateau towards Ranchi. From two or three vantage points on the winding road there are beautiful views of the level cultivated plain below the plateau, the great hill masses of Lugu and Jilinga, and Parasnath mountain in the distance.

Another road from Hazaribagh to the south leads to the valley of Barkagaon. This is at present a fertile rice-growing valley; but it is in the coal-belt, and will no doubt be transformed in time by the expansion of industry.

Only a few miles from Hazaribagh this road passes through scrub forests, mainly *sal*, and potentially valuable, but at present consisting only of saplings, all the tall trees having been felled. In these forests there are still many jungle-fowl, and leopards and tigers are seen from time to time.

Eastwards from Hazaribagh runs the road to Bagodar on the Grand Trunk Road (33 miles), and on to Hazaribagh Road station on the Grand Chord railway. This road also passes through great belts of forest, some of them now under the management of the Forest Department. Fourteen miles east of Bagodar, along the Grand Trunk road, is Dumri, whence a road to the south leads to the important and growing Bokaro coalfield; and a road to the north leads to Giridih, with its once important coalfield, now in its decline.

Dumri is almost at the base of Parasnath mountain, which rises to a height of 4,480 feet from the plain of Dhanbad, and dominates the landscape for many miles around. The mountain takes its name from the twenty-third of the Jain *Tirthankaras*, Parsvanath, who is said to have attained Nirvana by fasting to death on the mountain. (The *Tirthankaras* are holy men worshipped by the Jains; the twenty-fourth and last was Vardhamana Mahavira). Both of the main sects, Svetambara and Digambara, are established on the mountain, but there has been much friction, and some years ago there was a great deal of litigation between them over the right to control the ceremonial, the title to land on the mountain-side, and even the manner of worship.

Parasnath is also the sacred mountain (*Marang Buru*, or Great Mountain) of the Santals, and once a year they assemble in large numbers for the tribal hunt, and for matters of tribal importance such as misconduct of tribal officers or outcasting of erring members of the tribe. The hunts naturally give grave offence to the Jains, who are horrified at the killing of any animal on the mountain. The matter was taken to the courts, when the right of the Santals to observe the ancient custom of the tribal hunt on Parasnath was upheld. But apart from this tribal hunt



the mountain is rightly regarded as a sanctuary for wild life. There are bears, leopards and deer on the mountain, and a tiger is usually in residence.

The mountain is topped by a number of peaks, on several of which temples have been built. One lofty temple stands on the highest peak of all, where at least two earlier ones have been destroyed by lightning. This is not a matter for surprise to those who have seen the mountain at all seasons of the year, sometimes clear of clouds, blue with clear-cut edges on days of clear atmosphere, or opalescent in the evening light; but more often with its summit lost in the clouds coming up from the plains of Bengal, and thunderstorms among the peaks.

The easiest way to the summit is by the northern face, and the best way to tackle this route is to go by car or bus along the Giridih road from Dumri, turning to the right to the Jain centre of Madhuban, where the white spires and golden cupolas of the temples, with their waving banners, rise above the dark surrounding forest at the base of the mountain. The southern route, starting a mile or two from Dumri, is a good deal steeper. There is a bungalow on the summit, but there is no arrangement for food, and even water is difficult to get, so it is best for the ordinary visitor not to make plans for spending the night on the mountain. There is a good bungalow at Dumri.

Several attempts have been made to establish a sanatorium on Parasnath, generally for convalescent soldiers, but none were successful, mainly because of the confined space on the summit and the water difficulty. There are stories of men going mad from the monotony and the cramped space. There was once a tea-plantation on the side of the mountain, and fruit-growing has been tried from time to time without much success.

The last of the great roads out of Hazaribagh is that which runs northwards to Barhi on the Grand Trunk road (23 miles) and thence across the Barakar river and on to Kodarma and Patna. The town of Kodarma, which is five miles or more farther on than the railway station of that name, is situated near the top of the ghat by which the road descends to the plains of Gaya district. The drive

down the ghat is an interesting one, for there are dense reserved forests on both sides, the haunt of herds of sambhar, and of tigers which prey on them. Whilst motoring along this road on a cold weather morning I saw a pack of wild dogs cross the road in front of the car; and on another occasion, while halting for the night in the little forest bungalow of Meghatori near the bottom of the ghat, I went for an evening stroll in the forests near the road, and came on the body of a great sambhar stag, still warm, and just killed by a tiger, whose pug-marks showed in the soft ground. I called up some of the poor people of the village who rejoiced in the supply of meat, while I appropriated the spreading horns.

The town of Kodarma is one of the main centres of the mica industry. The mica deposits are found in a belt of country about 90 miles long by 20 miles wide, most of which lies in the north eastern part of Hazaribagh district. Many of the most valuable deposits and mines are inside the reserved forest. This mica field is easily the most important in the world, and produces more than 80 per cent of the world's output of good quality mica. Mica is found in lumps called 'books'—from the fact that it consists of parallel sheets, or leaves, of incredible thinness. A considerable part of the output comes from surface workings (called *uparchalla*), but as the mica exposed near the surface becomes exhausted the tendency is more and more towards deep mining. The mica splitters of Kodarma, Domchanch, Giridih and other places are famous throughout the industrial world. Many of them start from infancy, and acquire a skill which has never been equalled outside this locality, and mica is sometimes sent from as far away as Brazil to be split here. Mica had been worked, on a small scale, for hundreds, perhaps thousands, of years; but it was not until the latter part of the nineteenth century that mining developed on anything like its present scale. The first European to interest himself in mica was Mr. F. F. Chrestien about the year 1870, and the beginnings of his exporting business coincided with the discovery of the excellent insulating properties of mica. There are now several important firms in the business, as well as many smaller



ones, and it is believed that the industry employs in the mines, or in splitting and other operations, over a quarter of a million people.

Before leaving the district of Hazaribagh we may return for a moment to the headquarters town. The three large lakes near the jail and Reformatory School are a most attractive feature of the town. Another attractive spot is the park and reserved forest near Kanhari hill, about a mile to the east of the Circuit House. The park was started by the writer of this book. The idea was to create a national park in miniature, where the public can enjoy the beauties of nature in unspoilt surroundings, and can learn something of that great national asset, the forests of India. Experiments were carried out in anti-erosion work, in re-afforestation, in preservation of existing forests, especially on hill-sides, and in improvement of pasture land. Many flowering trees have been planted, a lake has been made below the hill, and fish have been placed in the lake. Another lake, with a bathing pool, is in course of construction. The whole area, including the adjoining reserved forest, forms a game sanctuary, and the visitor may see, if he moves quietly below the hill in the evening, peafowl and jungle-fowl coming out into the open, or a spotted deer half hidden in the forest, or even a leopard, stretched out on a rock on the hillside in the evening light. One of the most indefatigable supporters of the park is Mr. S. K. Gupta of Hazaribagh, who has done much for it and is planning a rustic bridge and other work.



## CHAPTER XXVIII

### PALAMAU

#### *Daltonganj—The Cheros—Palamau Fort—Ahir Story*

To the west of Hazaribagh is the district of Palamau. Its eastern boundary is the State of Surguja and the Mirzapur district of the United Provinces. Palamau differs in many respects—in its people and their customs, its climate, its large areas of tall forest—from the rest of Chota Nagpur. Its history has also followed a different course. Much of the district lies below the main Chota Nagpur plateau and the climate of the headquarters town of the district, Daltonganj, is much warmer than that of Ranchi or Hazaribagh.

Daltonganj is 110 miles from Ranchi, on a good road which passes through Chandwa and Latehar. The road runs for many miles just north of the Auranga river, and south of this river are lofty hill-ranges and the extensive reserved forests of Palamau. Daltonganj itself is on the bank of the North Koel river. The town has no buildings of any historical interest, and is almost entirely a trading and administrative centre. The development of the lac trade brought some prosperity to the town. The Central India Coalfields railway passes through Daltonganj on its way to join the Grand Chord line at Son East Bank. The projected continuation of this line into the Central Provinces will probably take off from Barwadih, south of Daltonganj. About forty miles north of Daltonganj, near the boundary of the district and near the Son river, is Japla, where there is a large cement factory.

The great majority of the people of Palamau are Hindus, though some of them are aboriginal or semi-aboriginal in origin, like the Bhuiyas and Kharwars, both numerous peoples. The Bhuiyas are a depressed race, many of



them being little better than serfs as the *Kamiauti* system still prevails in Palamau. Under this system a poor man borrows money from a landlord for some purpose like a wedding, and he works for the lender until the sum is repaid. In the meantime he gets a hut to live in, a small piece of land, and enough grain to keep him and his family alive. In practice the borrower usually finds it impossible to repay the money, and he gradually sinks into a condition of resignation to his lot, and even resists attempts at betterment. The *Kamiauti* Agreements Act of 1920 made agreements of this kind unlawful, but it has not sufficed to get rid of the system. One solution would be large-scale emigration to the tea-gardens or other places where regular work can be obtained, with a good chance of permanent settlement on the land. But apathy and unwillingness to leave their miserable huts and tiny pieces of land, have defeated several schemes of this kind. Wholesale settlement on unoccupied land is possible only after some preparation of the land and construction of works of irrigation.

The Kharwars, Cheros and Oraons play a prominent part in the old history of Palamau. The Oraons are most numerous in the southern parts of the district. Both the Oraons and the Kharwars claim to have once occupied the country beyond the Son, and to have held the strong point on the Rohtas plateau. The Cheros have a similar tradition. All these traditions point to a time in the distant past when the aboriginal races were driven out of the Kaimur hills and the plains below them, into the forests of Palamau and Ranchi. The Cheros built many forts in the Palamau district, the best-known of which is the old fort of Palamau, in the forest south of the main road from Ranchi to Daltonganj. The forest is cleared at intervals to preserve the ancient buildings, which are still the haunt of tigers. There are two forts, of which the walls, 18 feet thick, are fairly well preserved. The style of architecture is the same as that of Rohtas and Shergarh, forts of the Moghul period in Shahabad, and the Nagpuri gate in the new fort is a fine piece of work. It is said to have been removed from the old fort of Doisa, once the residence of the Maharajas of



*In the market*



*Washing for gold in the Sonapet valley*





*The old signalling tower on the  
summit of a hill near Hazaribagh*



*Caught in the Palamau forests*

Chota Nagpur, when the Chero chief Medni Rai took and sacked that place.

The history of Palamau for three hundred years centres round the fort. It was attacked by Shaista Khan in 1641, but the Cheros bought off the invaders. The same thing happened two years later, but in 1660 Daud Khan, the governor of Bihar, determined to reduce the fort, and after a long campaign captured it. In 1771 the Cheros came into conflict with the British, and Captain Camac marched South from Patna, and after a short bombardment stormed the fort. As one stands on the ramparts of this ruined fortress, surrounded by the jungle, and rarely visited except by the tiger on his nocturnal wanderings, it is strange to think that it was once a populous town, whose inhabitants had often heard the clash of arms and the roar of cannon.

The Ahirs of Palamau are the most numerous of the "Aryan" castes. They are cultivators and herdsman. Most of them live in the north of the district, migrating with their herds at the end of the cold weather to "fresh woods and pastures new," on the hillsides of Surguja State. The Ahirs, like the Bhuiyas, worship Bir Kuar, about whom there is a romantic legend. Bir Kuar had a sister who was a witch, and who used to lead the other girls at midnight into the depths of the forest to initiate them into her arts. The rendezvous was a forest pool, and the witch and her pupils used to remove their clothes and dive into the cool depths. Bir Kuar—mischievous young man—followed them one night and came on the party bathing in the starlight. He hid all their clothes. The girls got home eventually; all except Bir Kuar's sister the witch, who refused to show herself naked, and turned herself into a tigress and began to kill the cattle of the Ahirs. One night she even attacked Bir Kuar himself, but the buffaloes formed a ring round their young master, defended him, and killed the witch. The other Ahirs had promised Bir a horse if he should get rid of the tigress, but all that he got was a row of clay horses. To this day the traveller may see little heaps of clay horses at the base of the shrines of Bir Kuar, who is now the patron saint who protects the cattle from tigers.



## CHAPTER XXIX

### FORESTS AND WILD LIFE IN PALAMAU

#### *The Sal Forest—A Tiger Census—Tiger Shooting*

PALAMAU contains one important national asset—forests. In the rest of Chota Nagpur, except Singhbhum, the forests have largely disappeared, even on the steep or rocky hill-sides where cultivation is impossible; and the loss of the forests means a dead loss to the country with nothing to compensate for it. In Palamau the danger was seen and tackled just in time. In 1879 the first reserved forests, 179 square miles in area, were created, and in 1884 eighty square miles of protected forest were added, a good deal of which was subsequently converted into reserved forest. The present area of reserved forest is 225 square miles, and of demarcated protected forest 24 square miles. There are also 108 square miles of reserved forests under the control of the Somapura and Deogaon estates. The principal, and most valuable, forest tree is the *sal* (also called *sakhua*), or *shorea robusta*, the timber of which is valuable for building purposes, and for railway sleeper and pit-props. The *sal* has the valuable property of regenerating itself by shoots which spring from the stumps of felled trees. But for this characteristic of the *sal* tree there is little doubt that the greater part of Chota Nagpur would now be almost treeless.

With all this large area of mountain and forest it is natural that Palamau should be rich in wild life. The forests below the Netarhat plateau, and on the plateau itself at some seasons of a year, are the haunt of at least one herd of bison. Sambhar and spotted deer have their home in the forest, and pea-fowl and jungle-fowl are fairly common. Other game birds found here are the grey and black partridge, the spur-fowl, and in a few places sand-grouse. Leopards are fairly common, but they seem to avoid—per-

haps with good reason—the favourite beats of tigers. Wolves are occasionally seen, and the cheetah or hunting leopard is believed to survive in Palamau. The royal game, the tiger, is found throughout the forest areas.

About fifteen years ago the then Divisional forest officer, Mr. J. W. Nicholson, carried out a unique operation—a census of tigers. All sandy river-beds, and the ground round water-holes in the selected area, were carefully smoothed out by the forest guards and others on the night before the census. It was the first of May, in the hot weather, when every tiger has a drink at least once during the night. At daybreak the next morning the pug-marks of the tigers in the sand were measured and recorded by the enumerators, who had been coached in the work beforehand, and each of whom had a particular area allotted to him. The lists are brought to Mr. Nicholson, who checked them carefully and eliminated duplications. (This was not difficult, because tigers are rarely rash enough to trespass on each other's beats.) The results were as follows. The area of forest covered by the census was 115 square miles, and there were thirty-two tigers. Males predominated, (the expert can distinguish the pug-marks of male tigers by the broader outline). It so happened that there were no cubs in the area at the time. The two biggest tigers, whose enormous foot-prints were well-known to the forest officers who spent their lives travelling about the forest, were also absent on this occasion, probably on some foraging expedition in the adjoining forests.

Tigers are usually shot from *machans*—platforms in trees—the animal being driven up to the guns by a line of beaters; elephants cannot be used effectively in this type of forest. The tiger is located by its having killed a buffalo or other animal the night before. Young buffaloes are often tied up in likely places in the forest as baits. Having killed an animal, tigers nearly always proceed to drag it to some secluded spot, and then lie up not far from the carcass, having another meal off it the next night. The hunters and beaters are very skilful in some parts of the district. They know almost the exact spot in the forest where the tiger is lying up, and are experts at placing the



guns in the best position to shoot the tiger as he retires before the shouting beaters. There are particular trees in Palamau from which dozens of tigers have been shot within the memory of the *shikaris*.

Tigers are usually found alone, but occasionally a pair will come out in the beat. A few years ago I had the unusual experience of seeing 5 tigers together. A tiger had been marked down in a patch of very dense forest on the bank of a river about a hundred yards wide. On the other side of the river was the main forest, and we decided to try to drive the tiger out of his patch of forest, and across the river towards the main forest. The beaters were experienced men, under good *shikaris*. The guns were placed in *machans* on the bank of the river opposite the place where the kill had taken place. Soon after the beat started I was amazed to see five large tigers walk out of the forest opposite me and begin to cross the river. They were a huge male tiger, an old female, and three two-year-old cubs. My shot killed the old female in the middle of the river, but the male had hung back in the fringe of the forest on the far bank, and at the shot he disappeared and was no more seen. One of the other guns dropped a cub in the river, but the others followed their sire to safety.

## CHAPTER XXX

### SINGHBHUM

*Early immigrants—the Hos—Ho Religion and Customs—  
Forests—Saraikela and Kharsawan*

LIKE Manbhum, Singhbhum is a part of the lowest of the three levels which form the great plateau of Central India and Chota Nagpur. It contains much more hilly and broken country than Manbhum. In fact the whole of the Western half is a mass of hill ranges rising to 3,000 feet in the south west. The central tract, in which lie the town of Chaibasa and the great industrial city of Jamshedpur (also known as Tatanagar,) is an open plateau 400 to 800 feet above the sea, with a higher plateau to the south of it. The eastern part of Singhbhum is, again, for the most part hilly, though near the borders of Bengal it flattens out into an alluvial plain. The visitor to Singhbhum cannot help noticing the long, narrow piles of dark rock scattered about the plain; sometimes they are a few feet above the ground and sometimes a hundred feet or more. As Captain Depree puts it, it is as though the earth had opened and extruded a line of molten rock, which on cooling suddenly had burst into fragments. The whole of the eastern half of the district now consists of the great government estates. The older of these is the Kolhan which, as its name implies, is inhabited mainly by people of the Munda race, the Hos (formerly called *Kols*). In Porahat also Mundas and Hos form the bulk of the population.

No doubt, in early times, when Magadha was rising to power, the greater part of Singhbhum was a part of the vast forest of Jharkhand. A strange find was made many years ago near Bamanghati in Mayurbhanj, near the southern boundary of Singhbhum. The find was of gold



coins, among which were coins of the Roman Emperor Constantine, and other Roman Emperors. It is believed that the site of the find was on a trade route from Tamruk, the ancient port of Tamralipti, towards the north. In the south of the district, at Benusagar, there are remains of ancient temples, dating from the 9th and 10th centuries A.D. Old copper-plate inscriptions show that there were rulers of Mayurbhanj in the 12th century A.D. In those early days copper was smelted in many parts of Singhbhum. It is believed that many immigrants from Manbhum entered Singhbhum in the 14th century or earlier. When the Hos entered Singhbhum, they overcame the Bhuiyas who were the then inhabitants of the forest country, and in the latter half of the 18th century the Hos fought several successful wars to retain their independence, against the Rajas of Chota Nagpur, and Mayurbhanj. As far as is known the Muhammadans left them severely alone.

The British came into conflict with the Hos in 1767, and did not subdue the country until 1836, though an agreement was made in 1821—an agreement which was soon broken by the restless Hos. They took part in the Kol rebellion of 1831, a fierce rising of the Hos and Mundas which resulted in the murder of many Hindus and other non-aboriginals. A strong force of regular troops was employed in the operations which suppressed the rising. The continual trouble with the Hos led to the occupation of their country by a strong force in 1836, from which date they have been under the direct administration of the government without intermediate landlords. The tenantry has been peaceful since then with the exception of the troubled times of 1857, when many Hos joined the Raja of Porahat in his revolt against the British Raj. The estate of Porahat was confiscated by the government as a result of this revolt, but in 1895 the greater part of the estate was restored to the son of the Raja, Arjun Singh, on the latter's death, the forests remaining under the control of the government. Thirty-three villages of Karaikela *pargana* were granted to the Raja of Saraikela, four villages in *pargana* Chakradharpur to the Thakur of Kharsawan, and a few other

villages to other grantees. In 1934 the Raja of Porahat died without male heirs, and under the terms of the grant made in 1895 the estate reverted to the government.

The Hos are the handsomest of the Munda group of tribes, and they are also famous for their courage, and are known as the 'Larka Kols' or fighting Kols. The women are finely built, and many of them are really good-looking. Mr. O'Malley must have set himself an exceptionally high standard of feminine beauty, for he condemns the lot of them as 'ugly'. Like most other aboriginal tribes they are naturally truthful, and are of a happy and cheerful disposition. Colonel Dalton, who knew the aboriginals as well as any man before or since, was of opinion that the Hos were both morally and physically superior to the allied tribes. He relates some anecdotes to illustrate the physical courage which they display, and mentions the following curious and rather pathetic trait:—

A hard word to a woman never provokes a retort, but it causes in the person addressed a sudden depression or a vehement feeling of grief, which few persons would care to provoke a second time. If a girl appears mortified by anything that has been said, it is not safe to let her go until she is soothed. A reflection on a man's honesty or veracity may be sufficient to send him to self-destruction.

The Hos have the defects of the other tribes: improvidence and a fondness for drink. Until recent times the dress of both sexes among the Hos was of the scantiest. It consisted, according to Captain Depree, who was in charge of the topographical survey party in 1867, of a broad tape 'passed round the waist and brought down tight in front and hitched up again behind.' The worthy captain was quite startled at his first sight of a 'coleen' (to the captain the Hos were 'Coles', and this is his ingenious effort to coin a feminine form of the word) suddenly coming in sight round the corner of a jungle path, with a pitcher of water on her head. Another tribe allied to the Hos, the primitive tribe called the Juangs, living in the forests over the southern border of Singhbhum, has an ancient religious custom which requires the women to wear only



leaves. Hence the name 'the People of the Leaves' given to the tribe by a writer who some years ago pretended to have discovered them. Col. Dalton, in his *Ethnography of Bengal*, has a very interesting account of these people, illustrated with some very early, and excellent photographs.<sup>1</sup> This custom among the Juangs is now dying out.

The religious beliefs and customs of the Hos are, as would be expected, similar to those of the Mundas. They are keen hunters, and have practically exterminated the game in the Kolhan. They organize great *battues* in which thousands of people join. They sweep across hills and forests, driving the wild animals towards some central point on to which the lines of hunters converge, until the animals are surrounded and slaughtered.

Both in the Kolhan and in Porahat the system of *mundas* or village headmen, and *mankis* or heads of groups of villages prevails. The group is called a *pir*, but the word is now often applied to a larger unit, in which there may be several groups and several *mankis*. In Dhalbhum the headmen are called *pradhans*, and in the past they were always members of the family, usually aboriginal, which founded the village. In modern times the aboriginal headmen have been supplanted in many villages by outsiders, mainly Bengalees.

There are very large areas of Government forest in Singhbhum; in fact the greater part of the reserved and protected forests in the province is in this district. Reserved forests cover 903 square miles, of which 169, in Dhalbhum, are administered by the forest department un-

<sup>1</sup> One of these photographs is reproduced in this book. The reader may have noticed the rather unhappy expression on the girls' faces. The following extract from Col. Dalton's 'Ethnology of Bengal' perhaps furnishes the explanation:—

'Whilst I conversed with the males on their customs, language and religion the girls sat nestled together in a corner, silent and motionless as statues. After a time they showed signs of uneasiness.' In fact the good Colonel found that they were crying. He asked them what was the matter, and they replied that the leaves had become dry and uncomfortable. 'It was a bright sunny day' adds Col. Dalton 'and the crisp rustling as they rose to depart confirmed their statement.' When they returned from the forest, arrayed in fresh leaves, smiles had replaced the tears, and they were willing to demonstrate the dances of their tribe.

der agreement with the proprietors. Protected forests cover 353 miles, 45 being managed under agreements with the proprietors. A great part of the forest as in the rest of Chota Nagpur, consists of *sal* trees. The reserved forests are the haunt of many wild animals, including wild elephants in Saranda and Porahat, where bison are still found. Tigers are nowhere numerous, but some are found in the forest tracts in many parts of the district. Leopards are fairly common, and occasionally a black specimen is seen or shot. Herds of *sambhar* and *chital* deer live in the forests. It was on the main line of the Bengal Nagpur Railway passing through Porahat, that a wild elephant some years ago came into collision with a train, with fatal results to the elephant.

Singhbhum is a district of great interest to the geologist. Among the minerals found there are iron ore, manganese, copper, lime-stone, and in certain localities, gold. Some account of the minerals and industries may be found in Chapters XXXIII and XXXIV.

The two States of Saraikela and Kharsawan had during the time of British rule the status of Feudatory States, and were not included in British India. Both were surrounded by territory which was in British India—Saraikela almost entirely by Singhbhum, and Kharsawan by the districts of Singhbhum, Ranchi and Manbhum. They have now been brought into the general administration of India, and are within the Province of Bihar. More than half the population of these former states was recorded as members of tribes in the census of 1941, Hos alone forming more than one-fifth of the population. The area of Saraikela is 448 square miles, and that of Kharsawan 155 square miles. The outlying portion of Saraikela known as Karaikela covers 52 square miles, and is entirely within Porahat, except that its northern border marches with Ranchi.



## CHAPTER XXXI

### MANBHUM

#### *The People—History—Industry—Shooting*

MANBHUM forms the lowest of the three tiers of the Central Indian plateau, of which Ranchi and Hazaribagh form the middle step. It has a general elevation of about 1,000 feet. The greater part of the district consists of undulating land with scattered hills, some of them of striking appearance, rising like great domes out of the plain. The most remarkable of those hills are those already mentioned, which are conspicuous features of the landscape near Jhalda. In the north-west a double range of hills spreads out from the great mass of Parasnath, and in the west, south of the Ranchi road, hills and bare peaks lead to the Baghmundi or Ajodhya range, which is really an extensive plateau. In the extreme south of the district is another range, of which the highest point is Dalma hill, overlooking the city of Jamshedpur in Singhbhum.

Purulia, the headquarters of the district, lost some of its importance with the construction of the narrow gauge line to Ranchi, and the more recent construction of the broad gauge line from Chandil through Muri. There is a fine artificial lake near the town, known as Sahib Bandh. Both the town and the more open part of the district have the reputation of being healthy.

In the district as a whole about one third of the population consists of aboriginals, of whom the Santals number over 300,000. Other very numerous castes or tribes include the Kurmis and the Bhumij. The latter tribe, which is found largely in the south of the district, is one of the Munda tribes which has become Hinduized. They observe the Hindu festivals and do not touch beef. Many of them still worship *Singbonga*, the sun-god, and observe festivals

like the *Karam* festival, and they share with the Mundas the custom of preserving sacred groves. The language spoken over a great part of the district is Bengali, the dialect being that of Western Bengal, known as *Rarhi Boli*.

Little is known of the early history of Manbhum until the time of the British occupation. Some reference has already been made to J. D. Beglar's theory of the ancient routes, and to the early Jain settlements. From the earliest years of the British occupation Manbhum was known as a turbulent country, plagued with numerous powerful bands of robbers. At the end of the 18th century there was trouble of a different kind with the Pachete Raj, whose estate had been put to sale under the harsh sale laws. The *zemindar* tried to get the sale cancelled by lawful means, and when this failed he openly defied the authorities and was loyally supported by his tenants. In the end the government had to climb down and restore the estate to the Pachete family. Serious trouble broke out again in 1832. It started with succession disputes in the Barabhum Raj family, but grievances over the administration of the tenancy laws gave the troubles almost the character of an agrarian rising, and enabled the leader, Ganga Narayan Singh, a member of the Barabhum family, to collect a large following of *ghatwals* (hereditary police) and others to assert his authority over a large tract of country. Many troops were engaged before peace was restored. As a result of this trouble the new district of Manbhum, with its headquarters at Manbazar, came into being. Five years later Purulia became the headquarters.

The two principal industries of Manbhum are coal and lac. The coal industry is concentrated in the northern part of the district—the Dhanbad subdivision. A short account of the coal-fields will be found in Chapter XXXIII. The lac industry is established mainly in the southern half of the district, for although Lac is produced almost everywhere in the district, the factories are located mainly at Jhalda—the most important centre—Purulia, Balarampur, Chandil, Chas, Manbazar and a few other places. Some facts about the industry are given in Chapter XXXV. It may be noted that Jhalda is also well known for its small-scale



manufactures of agricultural implements, knives, sword-sticks, and even guns.

Another important industrial undertaking in Manbhum is that of the Kumardhubi Engineering Works with the Eagle Rolling Mills, at Kumardhubi near the Grand Trunk Road. At the same place are the Kumardhubi Fireclay and Silica Works. Still another industry which is now developing is that of processing aluminium ore. The factory of the Indian Aluminium Company Ltd., which has been built for this purpose, is situated at Muri, though the bauxite is brought from the neighbourhood of Lohardaga, in Ranchi district. A great new project which is beginning to take shape is the factory for the manufacture of ammonium sulphate for general use as artificial manure, at Sindri on the banks of the Damodar river.

There is not much to attract the sportsman to Manbhum. The disappearance of the forests has been more complete than in any other district of Chota Nagpur. Leopards are still fairly common in the hills—they are even said to survive on the Pachete hill near the coalfields—and tigers are occasionally heard of. Snipe and wild-fowl visit favoured localities in the cold weather. I may here relate a strange shooting incident which took place a few months after my arrival in India. I was posted to Manbhum as an Assistant Settlement officer. The life was a hard one, but healthy and exhilarating. I lived under canvas, and my camp moved every two days. The days were spent in the saddle, riding across country to visit and inspect the surveyors engaged in the cadastral survey, and the evenings in writing reports, and in studying for the departmental examinations in law and language. Often the camp was not too far from some quiet pond to which wild-fowl came on their evening flight. One evening I went out with my gun to such a small pond, a mile or more from any human habitation. The light was failing. A solitary duck rose and was silhouetted against the evening sky. I fired and brought it down. It was a large and beautiful duck, with the most brilliant colouring of head and neck that I have ever seen on a living creature; it was a radiant pink. I kept the feathers to consult my superior officer—an expert on birds

—on his next visit. He came after a few weeks and I showed them to him. 'You have shot', he said 'one of the rarest birds in the world, and perhaps one of the last surviving specimens,—the pink-headed duck.'



## CHAPTER XXXII

### THE GRAND TRUNK ROAD

*244 miles through the Province*

THE Grand Trunk road from Calcutta runs through the province of Bihar for 244 miles, on its way to Delhi and the North. It enters the province by the bridge over the Barakar river, 149 miles from Calcutta, and it leaves it by the bridge over the Karamnasa in Shahabad district at about the 393rd mile. This long stretch of the great arterial road, which runs from the plains of Bengal to Delhi and Lahore and to far-away Peshawar, may well be given a chapter to itself.

The Grand Trunk road in Bihar bears little resemblance to the road which Kipling described, a thousand miles farther to the north-west—a road crowded with colourful and ever-changing traffic. Here it runs across open country, with Santal villages here and there, as straight as a Roman road, except where it winds down the steep hill-sides on the edge of the Chota Nagpur plateau. It is a wide road, lined with great trees which at many places form an arch high overhead. Almost the only vehicles to be seen, except near the villages, are motor-buses and lorries and an occasional private car. Even in Dr. Hooker's day he observed that the 'noble line' of the road was unfrequented, except for pilgrims on their long journey to the Jagernath temple at Puri. Now even that traffic has disappeared, for the pilgrim now travels by the Grand Chord railway line, which for the whole of its length through the province runs almost parallel to the road.

The road was constructed in the ten years preceding the middle of the 18th century. Before that, as we have seen, the road from Calcutta to Benares ran 20 or 30 miles

farther to the south, through Hazaribagh and on to the present alignment at Sherghati. Before the days of that 'new military road' there was no road worthy of the name in this part of the country; in fact a great part of the rolling plain through which the Grand Trunk road now passes was a wilderness, inhabited only by bandits and wild beasts. There were numerous tracks; many of which are shown on the maps made by Major Rennell for the East India Company towards the end of the 18th century; but the main artery of communication between Calcutta and the north was the Ganges, with the river road along its southern bank.<sup>1</sup> The present alignment of the Grand Trunk road was made possible by the construction of the bridge over the Barakar at Chirkunda.

There are plenty of signs of industrial activity on both sides of the border. After crossing the Chirkunda bridge, travelling westwards, the traveller passes great industrial plants like the Kumardhubi Engineering Works and the Fireclay and Silica Works, as well as the chimneys and pit-head structures of coal-mines, and the smoke of scores of burning heaps of coal, where coke is being made on a small scale. We soon leave this industrial belt behind, and enter a vast expanse of rolling open country, with isolated hills to the south, and the Tundi ranges to the north; and looming far ahead the grand outline of Parasnath. The ruins of old bungalows, here and there, are reminders of the days when this was the main artery of communication in this part of India. Obelisks still mark the military camping grounds, which were still being used by troops marching on the road in the cold weather up to the time of the first world war. Near some of the camping grounds are straggling villages showing signs of former prosperity; these are the permanent bazars known as *chattis*, which were established to supply the needs of the troops. One such place is Nirsa, about seven miles from

<sup>1</sup> Rennell's maps are the first detailed maps made of Bengal or indeed of any part of India, and are of very great interest. One curious mistake, which shows how little was known of the country through which the road now passes, is that Rennell shows the Barakar river as flowing past Ichak (a few miles from Hazaribagh), on the plateau, and far to the south of its real alignment on the plain.



the Bengal border, and another fourteen miles or so farther to the west is Gobindpur, once the Headquarters of the subdivision (now at Dhanbad). The inspection bungalow, originally the residence of the subdivisional officer, stands away from the road, near a fine lake. From Gobindpur the road to Dhanbad branches to the south (Dhanbad 6 miles), and other roads branch off northwards to Tundi and Pokhuria.

Continuing our journey to the west, the Grand Trunk road takes us through Rajganj, beyond which there is a road to the left leading to Katras and other parts of the Jharia coal-field. Along all this part of the road the edge of the coal-field is only a few miles to the south. After another ten miles we reach Topchanchi. We are now near the slopes of Parasnath mountain, of which some account has been given in Chapter XXVII, and a road to the north leads to the great water reservoir, about a mile from the Grand Trunk road, which supplies drinking water to the coal-field. This beautiful spot should certainly be seen by all who can spare a little time. The forests which come down to the lake are protected from cutting and are now a sanctuary for wild life. Speaking of Topchanchi, European travellers were never very good at transliterating Indian place-names, but Dr. Hooker's shot at this one was one of the widest. He calls it Tofe Choney.

Passing the base of Parasnath, the road crosses the Grand Chord line of the East Indian Railway at mile 200, and two miles farther on we pass the railway station for pilgrims to Parasnath. A mile beyond that we reach Dumri where a good road branches off northwards to Giridih, twenty-five miles away, and another road to the south leads to the Bokaro coal-field. Fourteen miles farther to the west we come to Bagodar, one of the largest of the old *chattis*, and still a trade centre. From here a road branches southwards to Hazaribagh, thirty-three miles away, and another to Hazaribagh Road station on the Grand Chord Line, eight miles to the north. We pass the successive stages where troops used to halt on the long march along the road—some of them marked with mouldering memorials to those who died of cholera and

other diseases. Dr. Hooker refers to a pipal tree by the roadside, apparently somewhere west of Barakatha, which was known in his day as the 'Cholera tree' because of the ravages of that disease in a detachment of soldiers who had encamped at this spot. At the 229th mile we come to the Surajkund hot springs, to the south of the road, where Dr. Hooker boiled eggs. The next big village is Barhi, once an important place and subdivisional head quarters (closed in 1872), but the public buildings have now fallen into ruins. Here, in a small cemetery near the road, is the grave of Col. Knyvett, Commander of the Grand Trunk road, who died here in 1857. There is a roomy bungalow where the traveller can stop for a rest and a meal (provided that he has brought it with him). A road branches southwards to Hazaribagh, twenty-three miles away—part of the arterial road connecting Ranchi with Patna.

Two miles beyond Barhi we come to the Barakar river. The great stone bridge over this river, which was building when Dr. Hooker came this way in 1848, was destroyed by a tremendous flood in 1913, after a fall of 10 inches of rain in 24 hours. The narrow iron bridge which was built to replace it stood up to the strains and stresses of the war years, when huge convoys of army vehicles frequently passed this way, *en route* to the Burma front. But in 1946 there was another great flood and it is probable that a tree rolling down the river stuck against one of the piers. At any rate the bridge gave way, and some of its twisted girders were forced far down the river. So that now (in 1948) the traveller can see, as he crosses the wide river by a temporary bridge in the dry weather, or by a ferry in the rains, the wrecks of two bridges in the river bed, and the preparations for building a third, which we may hope will have better luck.

A few hundred yards to the west of the Barakar river the road to Kodarma takes off to the north. This road passes through the mica field and the reserved forests of Kodarma, and after dropping down the ghat to Rajauli goes on to Nawada and Patna. The next big village along the road is Chauparan, at the 259th mile from Calcutta,



where a road to the south goes to Chatra (thirty one miles) and thence by a circular route back to Hazaribagh through Lepo. From Chauparan the road begins to drop down the *ghat* to Danua at the bottom, the drop being about 740 feet in  $7\frac{1}{2}$  miles. This *ghat* was even in recent years well-wooded, and the haunt of large numbers of wild animals and game birds; but most of the big forest has now gone, and with it the wild life, though an occasional leopard or even tiger is still seen by travellers on the road at night. To the north is the peak of Lohabar hill, 1788 feet high.

A few miles west of Danua we come to the bridge over the Mohana river. Near here, to the south of the road, is Bhaluachatti, the country seat of the Maharaja of Tikari, a noted sportsman and first-class shot, both at big and small game. Many tigers have been shot by the Maharaja and his guests in the forests near the house. In fact, so skilful are the *shikaris*, and so well do they know the habits of tigers and their probable line of retreat that, as in Palamau, many tigers have been shot from the same tree. For about ten miles we now pass through a belt of forest, many of the trees being teak, grown from seeds dropped from trees planted by the roadside. At at least one place one can see the pillars of an old camping ground, now overgrown by the jungle. At about the 283rd mile we come to the wide sandy bed of the Lilajan river, which is crossed by a causeway or 'Irish bridge'. Occasionally in the rainy season, when there has been heavy rain in the hills to the south, the traveller is held up here by the causeway being under water, though rarely for more than a few hours.

Just after crossing the causeway we come to Dobhi, whence the road to Bodh Gaya town branches off to the right. The next big village on the Grand Trunk road is Sherghati, where the Morhar river is crossed by two masonry bridges. This is the place where the 'New' military road from Calcutta through Hazaribagh once joined the Grand Trunk road, which is on its old alignment from this point westwards. Sherghati, like Barhi, was once the headquarters of a subdivision, and remains

of fine bungalows with their avenues of trees can still be seen.

There is not much of interest in the next thirty or forty miles of the road. To the south are the South Gaya hill-ranges, and to the north isolated hills stand up from the plain. A few miles before reaching the small town of Aurangabad, the traveller can see a couple of miles to the south, the beautiful temple of Deo, a temple of the sun, constructed probably in the 15th century, and built of stone in a dignified and restrained style. A couple of generations ago, when travel was a more leisurely affair, many a traveller would go a few miles out of his way, on horse-back or on foot, to see places like this. But now-a-days cars roar past along the straight road, and the passengers rarely see a fine old monument like this temple of the sun at Deo, much less get out of their car and walk across country for a closer view.

There is nothing to detain us at Aurangabad, the headquarters of a subdivision and a small town, and we will push on to Barun and the Son. This great river is, near this point, well over two miles wide. The East Indian Railway bridge is 10,052 feet long, with a waterway of 9,300 feet, and is the second or third longest bridge in the world. The river is crossed by an anicut, from which the eastern part of the Son canal system branches off. The bridge is 'decked' for the use of motor vehicles, but at present only the military are allowed to use the motor crossing; and it is best to arrange with the station-master at Dehri-on-Son or Son East bank, in advance if possible, if one wants to send a car across the river. It can then be loaded on to a motor-wagon and taken across the bridge by the next train.

After crossing the Son we come to the small town of Dehri where the main Western canal takes off from the river, and a road and light railway runs to Rohtas, 25 miles to the south. Thirteen miles farther along the Grand Trunk road we come to Sasaram, about which town, and the great mausoleum of Sher Shah, some account is given in the chapter on Shahabad. In the hills to the south is the ruined hill-fort of Shergarh, built by Sher



Shah. There is not much of special interest in the villages and small towns on the remainder of the road in Shaha-bad. Military camping grounds can still be seen at Aurangabad, Mohania, Durgauti and Khajura, and some of the old semaphore towers are still standing. The Grand Trunk road leaves the district and the province at the masonry bridge over the Karamnasa river.

## CHAPTER XXXIII

### INDUSTRY

*The coal-fields of Chota Nagpur—Iron and Steel—  
Jamshedpur—Fireclay, Lime-stone and Bauxite.*

ACROSS the Chota Nagpur plateau from east to west runs the trough which contains the valley of the Damodar, and it is along the line of this trough that the great coal-fields of India are situated. By far the most important of the coal-fields at present are the Jharia field in Manbhum; the Raniganj field in the Eastern extremity of Manbhum (this field lies mainly in Bengal); and the Bokaro field in Hazaribagh district. But there are vast reserves of coal in coal-fields still further west, particularly the North Karanpura field, which lies to the north of the Damodar river and south-west of Hazaribagh; and the centre of the coal industry may well move, within a generation from now, from the older Raniganj and Jharia coal-fields to the Karanpura zone. The national importance of the Bihar coal-fields may be judged from the fact that well over half of the coal output of India comes from Bihar. In 1938 the province produced over 15 million tons of coal.

The Jharia coal-field lies to the south of the Grand Trunk Road, its northern edge being about five miles from that road, and its southern edge lying across the Damodar river. The field covers about 175 square-miles. There are more than twenty seams exceeding four feet in thickness, many of them consisting of coking coal. Geological experts have estimated that the coal reserves in this field amount to over 4,000 million tons.

Coal was worked in various places in this field well before the end of the 18th century, but production and supply to Calcutta were intermittent, largely owing to unfavourable reports on the coal by experts. Later reports



were favourable, but difficulties of transport prevented great development, and even as late as 1891 the annual output was less than 100,000 tons. In 1894 the railway line from Barakar to Dhanbad and Katras was opened, and the following year saw the opening of the line to the south-eastern part of the field—Kusunda to Pathardih. Within a year the output of coal in the Jharia field increased ten-fold. The opening of new railway lines and the construction of numerous sidings have led to increasingly rapid development.

The coal-field suffered in the past, and still suffers from the careless and totally unscientific way in which the proprietors, many of them ignorant, and even illiterate, men, leased out blocks of land to small concerns. The result in parts of the field is very serious congestion, which makes proper mining methods impossible, and has led indirectly to enormous losses of coal by fire and other means. The coal under the ground, close to the crowded Jharia Bazar has been on fire for many years. There are several other great fires in the coal-field, some of which have been caused by pressure and spontaneous combustion. Nothing can be done except to try to confine the fires to a certain area. The fires are not conspicuous during the day, but at night-time from a height the glow is visible for many miles. Incidentally, this made the task of blacking out this great industrial area against enemy air-raids almost impossible.

Up-to-date mining and loading methods are spreading in the coal-field, especially among the big companies, which are in a position to look ahead and make long-term plans. A very important development of which Messrs. Bird and Co. were the pioneers, is sand-stowing. Under this system, sand is brought from the bed of the Damodar river, usually by aerial ropeways, and is pumped with water into the seams from which the coal has been extracted. The sand packs tight and supports the roof permanently. The government of India has now made this system compulsory under certain conditions, and assists the companies concerned.

The chief colliery companies have for many years main-

tained their own hospitals and dispensaries, in addition to those under official control. The health of the coal-fields was for long looked after by the Mines Board of Health, which, among other things, enforced standards of living accommodation for workers. The water supply, from the great reservoirs at Topchanchi, was controlled by the Jharia Water Board. The health and general welfare of colliery labour is now looked after by the Coal Mines Welfare Board under the government of India. It has already succeeded in considerably reducing the incidence of malaria in the coal-field.

The Indian School of Mines is situated at Dhanbad, also the headquarters of the inspectorate of mines. An important fuel research station has also been set up.

The Bokaro coal-field starts a few miles east of the eastern edge of the Jharia field, and runs due westwards for nearly forty miles, forsaking the valley of the Damodar, and following that of one of its tributaries, the Bokaro river. Coal-mining is confined at present to the eastern end of the field. The principal seam, known as the Kargali seam, is in places no less than 120 feet in thickness. One of the sights of industrial India is the great open quarry where coal is won by means of modern mechanised equipment. The overburden is removed and dumped, by blasting, the use of grabs and Diesel-driven shovels, and great lorries (known as 'euclids') which carry 25 tons or more at a time. The exposed coal is removed by the same mechanised means. Standing on the edge of the great hole in the ground the spectator can see, it is said, over a million tons of coal.

Giridih is a small coal-field covering only eleven square-miles but containing very valuable seams of coal, now approaching exhaustion. The lower Karharbari seam,—10 to 24 feet thick,—consists of very good coking coal. In 1871 the railway line from Madhupur to Giridih was opened, and the East Indian Railway Company began to develop their properties here on a large scale. Since that date by far the greater part of the coal production in the Giridih area has been theirs. Out of this compact field, the East Indian Railway alone has probably taken



some 40 million tons of coal; but its days are numbered, and it may be anticipated that in ten or fifteen years from now it will again become the sleepy hollow which it was before the railway came.

The South Karanpura coal-field covers seventy-five square-miles and lies along the valley of the Damodar, west of the town of Ramgarh. There are several seams, of which one, the Argada seam, reaches 90 feet in thickness. There are large open quarries here, from which a great part of the coal is mined.

North Karanpura is the largest of all the coal-fields of India, and covers 550 square-miles. There are many seams, some of them over 70 feet thick, and the coal varies in quality. The reserves of coal in this field have been variously estimated, but it is believed that there are 10,000 million tons of coal at depths less than 2,000 feet. For all practical purposes, therefore, the field is inexhaustible. It is situated west of the Ramgarh Hazaribagh road, and its Southern boundary is a few miles south of the Damodar river.

These are the principal coal-fields of Bihar. There are several others along the line of the Damodar valley and to the west of it, including the small Ramgarh field to the south of Bokarao, and the Hutar field in Palamau district. In Hazaribagh district there are a number of other localities where coal is now being worked, and in the Santal Parganas there are seven or eight small coalfields in the skirts of the hills, yielding mainly coal of inferior quality.

Very large quantities of iron ore—mainly hæmatite—are found in Southern Singhbhum. A great part of the ore mined goes to the Tata Iron and Steel Company, and most of the remainder to the Bengal Iron and Steel Co., the Indian Iron and Steel Co., Messrs. Bird and Co., and to other lessees of land containing deposits of iron ore. The deposits are located both in Singhbhum and in the neighbouring States. In Singhbhum one of the largest deposits is at Noamundi, whence the Tata Iron and Steel Co. obtain a great part of their requirements. The richness of the deposits in this area was first brought to light

by Mr. P. N. Bose of the Geological Survey, in 1904; his discoveries were at Gorumahisani in Mayurbhanj State, and the great enterprise founded by Jamshedji Tata was based on those deposits. The site selected for the smelters was near the junction of the Subarnarekha and Kharkai rivers, and on that expanse of forest and wilderness has grown up the great and well-planned city of Jamshedpur, with a population of well over 100,000.

About 1½ million tons of iron ore are produced annually in Singhbhum, or nearly half the total for the whole of India. The opening of the railway line from Amda to Gua, Noamundi and other places in 1924 greatly opened up the ore areas. At Gua an aerial ropeway is in operation.

The Tata Iron and Steel Works is the largest steel-making unit in the British Commonwealth of Nations. The five blast furnaces can produce a million tons of pig-iron in a year. The open hearth plant and the Duplex plant between them can produce 3,000 tons of steel a day. The rolling mill turns out finished steel products of many standard kinds. The sheet mills produce over 100,000 tons of sheets *per annum*, and the pressed steel sleeper plant has a capacity of 20,000 tons of steel sleepers. Among other activities of the company is the manufacture of wheels, tyres and axles for the railways, and of agricultural implements. All the mills are electrically driven, the power house, which supplies current for the town as well as for the steel plant and other companies, having a capacity of 37,500 kilowatts.

Among the industrial enterprises which cluster round the Tata Iron and Steel Company are the Tinsplate Company, the Agricultural Implement Company, the Steel and Wire Works of Sir Indra Singh and Sons, and the Indian Cable Company. The city of Jamshedpur is a fine example of modern town-planning; care has been taken to provide for open spaces, and to plan the country round the city as well as the city itself. Interesting work in reafforesting the bare hills is going on under the direction of the Company. To the north of the town is the great reservoir of the Dhimra Lake, already one of the beauty spots of the province.



Reference is made in CHAPTER XXXI to another important industrial undertaking, the Kumardhubi Engineering Works and Eagle Rolling Mills, an Kumardhubi near the Grand Trunk Road in the east of the Dhanbad subdivision. The setting up of two other steel plants in the province under government auspices is also believed to be in contemplation.

I may mention here another important mineral which is found in large quantities in parts of Chota Nagpur—fire-clay. Without refractories the iron and steel industry, and indeed many other industries, would come to a stop. The most important fire-clay works in the province is the Kumardhubi fire-clay and silica works in Manbhum.

Lime-stone is found in great quantities at a number of places in Chota Nagpur, and several important cement works are situated there. Among the most important of them are the works at Japla and Rohtas near the Son river, Jhinkpani in Chaibasa, and Khelari in Ranchi. To bauxite and the aluminium industry some reference is made in Chapter XXVI and mica is mentioned in Chapter XXVII. Many other minerals are worked, or are known to exist in Chota Nagpur, particularly in the geologically rich and varied district of Singhbhum.

## CHAPTER XXXIV

### GOLD, COPPER AND DIAMONDS

#### *The Sonapet Gold-mining Boom—Copper-mining and Smelting—the mystery of the Chota Nagpur diamonds*

GOLD has been recovered from very early times in many places in Singhbhum and in the State of Gangpur, and in parts of the Ranchi district. In fact it was the Sonapet valley in the latter district which formed the centre of the gold-mining boom mentioned below. The gold-content of the quartz veins is extremely small. Nevertheless there is ample evidence, in the form of ancient stones and pestles which are found, sometimes in large numbers, near quartz outcrops, that quartz was crushed by primitive methods in former times. Nowadays the common method followed by the local people is that of washing the sands of streams where gold is found. I have myself seen women washing for gold in the Samarang river (samarang is the Mundari for gold) in the Sonapet Valley. They were dressed in rags, and had smeared themselves with mud, to attract the sympathy of the god. They earned on an average four annas a day each. This was in 1925. In 1868, according to Captain Depree who wrote the report of the topographic survey of Chota Nagpur, the average earnings were 2 pice a day. In 1909, when the Gazetteer of Singhbhum was written, the figure was 3 annas a day.

Gold exercises a curious fascination over mankind. Hard-headed business men become like unto trusting widows and clergymen when a gold mining company is floated. For gold is like love, and just as the lover is blind to the defects of the beloved, so the business-man, his head turned by the lure of gold, is blind to the defects in the prospectus. 1888 to 1891 were the years of the great Sonapet gold boom (freely, and probably wrongly, tran-



slated 'Sonapet' means a 'belly-full of gold,' and no more poetic or mellifluous name ever rang in the ears of the citizens of Calcutta). Close-fisted banias, and business-men from Lancashire, fought for the privilege of throwing their money down the drain, by buying at fantastic prices the scrip of mushroom companies, some of which never got as far as holding any land, gold-bearing or not. I have seen some of the scrip—handsome stuff, almost like parchment, with lovely gold lettering—now preserved as heirlooms in the families of disillusioned investors. I am credibly informed that a piece of land near the Ranchi Circuit House, 50 miles from the scene of activities, changed hands for a goodly sum. Grown-up men were taken in by the most antiquated dodges, like shooting gold dust into the rock with a 12 bore gun. But let Mr. J. Malcolm Maclaren<sup>1</sup> of the Geological Survey of India, give his detached expert view of the affair;—

In 1888 the discovery of rich alluvial specimens in the Sonapet valley in the north of Singhbhum caused a little 'prospecting' to be carried on in the neighbourhood, and the public excitement thus gradually aroused culminated in a memorable 'boom' some two years later. Before October 1890 some fifteen or sixteen companies had been formed, comprising names—Patkum, Patpat, Dhadka, Sonapet, etc.—that are even now only too well remembered. Within three months thirty-two companies with an aggregate capital of 151 lakhs of rupees, or a little less than a million pounds sterling, were in existence; large and valuable reefs were daily being discovered; great sums were squandered on useless mining machinery; and a paper specially devoted to the subject was published. In short, there were exhibited all those extravagances of opinion and of capital which always characterize the first 'boom' in an agricultural or commercial community. All the while, shares were being sold at many times their normal value, confidence being to a great extent sus-

<sup>1</sup> Records of the Geological Survey of India, *The Auriferous occurrences of Chota Nagpur*. (1904).

tained by the monthly production of a small bar of gold from one mine. Early in 1892, however, it was accidentally discovered that the crushings of this mine, the only producer, had been systematically 'salted' by certain persons connected with the local management. Hitherto, the conduct of prospecting and mining operations had been, with one or two notable exceptions, entrusted to men ignorant of the subject; but, with the collapse of the above company, expert advice was sought, and being unfavourable, 'extinguished the last smouldering embers left by the raging fires of the boom.' By the end of 1892, there were not more than a couple of the numerous mining companies left, and these were dragging out a very precarious existence.

Copper, like gold, has been mined from very early times, and in the copper belt of Singhbhum remains of old workings are found in many places. In modern times copper-mining has had a chequered career. Captain Depree does not exaggerate when he describes the sight which met the eyes of the surveyors in 1862 at Nadu, north of the Dhoba hill, as 'melancholy'. Here were some forgotten engineers and miners, cut off from the world, half-starved, and pumping away at the water in the shaft, at the bottom of which was an inexhaustible spring. The adit had fallen in, and they had nothing to repair it with. They had so far found no ore, and if they had, there would have been no fuel for smelting, for all the surrounding forest had been destroyed. The story reminds one of that forgotten ship of the Royal Navy, which had run aground on a sand-bank in the East Indies. Many years later a passing ship found the survivors still living on the hulk, and still carrying out the proper routine of a naval vessel. Ancient midshipmen now shuffled about the decks. Some Admiralty rule prevented them from abandoning the ship as long as it was above water and had not been officially condemned.

Copper is now produced by the Indian Copper Corporation at Maubhandar, near Ghatsila on the Bengal Nagpur Railway main line. The ore is obtained mainly



from the Mosaboni mines. This important enterprise supplies a great part of India's requirements in refined copper and brass sheet. The method of production is fascinating, and to a layman almost miraculous. I cannot attempt to describe what takes place, but it appears that the copper is collected from the films which form on bubbles. I shall not be surprised if the reader finds himself unable to swallow this. I can only suggest that he should go and see for himself what goes on.

In the days of Akbar and Jahangir Chota Nagpur was famous for its diamonds—a fact illustrated by the story of the diamond and the ram's head, related in Chapter XXIV; this was in fact the spur which urged the generals and armies of the Moghuls on to the invasion of the forest country. But all trace of the diamond-workings, if there were any, has now been lost, nor are any diamonds known to have been found in Chota Nagpur for the last two or three hundred years.

In his *Jungle Life in India* the geologist Ball, who quotes freely from a paper by Blochmann in the *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal*, Vol. XL, gives a useful summary of the evidence about the presence of diamonds in the Ranchi district and in Sambalpur (Orissa province). The earliest evidence is that of Ptolemy's map, but only an incurable optimist would hope to fix the position of any diamond-bearing lands on the basis of this map. There are references to the diamonds of Chota Nagpur in the Akbarnama, and also in the Turuk-i-Jahangir. According to the latter, diamonds were found in the bed of the Sankh river (in the West of the Ranchi district). In the dry season mounds or tumuli were left exposed in the river-bed, over some of which 'insects were seen to hover', and these were the ones which contained diamonds. Sometimes a diamond worth a lakh of rupees was found, and one worth fifty thousand rupees was sent to Jahangir's court.

In 1766 Mr. Motte travelled to Sambalpur to get first-hand information about the diamonds. He purchased a few, and was shown red earth in the Mahanadi, below its junction with the Ib river, in which diamonds were said

to be found. As time passes this diamond Eldorado seems to recede farther beyond the horizon. In 1850 the government put up for sale the right to prospect for diamonds, and the highest offer was two hundred rupees a year. There are a few references by other travellers, but they give little definite information about localities or the number or quality of stones found. Col. Dalton, an accurate writer, says that the Maharaja of Chota Nagpur had a diamond worth forty thousand rupees, found in his domains. Ball himself made some careful enquiries and found that in Sambalpur the method was to direct the stream of the Mahanadi from a portion of the bed by temporary embankments, and to search the ground for diamonds by washing, in much the same way as washing for gold.

A curious thing is that the two rivers mentioned—the Ib and the Sankh—are not connected, the Ib being well inside Jashpur. But those who fancy their chances at finding a few diamonds may note that near Rajadera, at the southern end of Pakripat, and at the head-waters of the Sankh, there is a waterfall called Hira Dag—the Diamond Falls. Finally there is a third place, on another river which has its source in this high ground—the North Koel—and at a village on this river Jean Baptiste Tavernier, Baron of Aubonne, saw 5,000 people employed in damming up parts of the river and searching the gravel for diamonds. (Tavernier, *Collections of Travels through Turkey*); and the place where they were working is believed to be in the village of Simah in Palamau district.



## CHAPTER XXXV

### THE LAC INDUSTRY

#### *The Lac Research Institute*

INDIA is by far the greatest producer of lac in the world; in fact 90 per cent of the world's output of lac comes from India, and at least half of India's production comes from Chota Nagpur. Lac is a secretion produced by the female of the lac insect, and deposited on the twigs of suitable trees, of which the principal are the *kusm*, the *palas* and the *bair*. It is propagated by tying twigs covered with the incrustation, at the correct season, to suitable trees. The insects spread over the trees, and when the depositing of lac is finished, the small branches with their load of lac are cut off, and the lac is scraped from the wood. There are two harvests from both *kusm* and *palas*. The raw lac is purchased by the factories, and is crushed, cleaned, heated, turned into sheet lac by skilled workers toiling in front of the fire with hands, teeth and toes (it is an amazing sight to see them stretching out the thin transparent sheets in this way), and ultimately sorted and converted into the shapes for commercial use. The colouring matter of lac, once the most valuable part of it, is now a waste product. The annual production of shellac—the commercial article—in India is from 31,000 to 54,000 tons.

Lac is used in many industries, from the manufacture of bowler-hats to that of varnishes. Among its most important consumers are the manufacturers of gramophone records. It is threatened, like many other natural products, by synthetic substitutes, and in 1921 the Indian Lac Association for Research was founded by the initiative of the industry. It was financed by a cess on exports imposed by the Government of India. In 1924 work began on the Lac Research institute at Namkum near Ranchi,

the first director and bio-chemist being Mrs. Dorothy Norris. In 1931 the Indian Lac Research institute was taken over by the Government of India, which appointed a committee—the Indian Lac Cess Committee—to control the organization. A shellac research bureau was also set up in London, and this functioned for about 17 years, until 1938 when it was decided to concentrate all research work on Namkum. Among the numerous sides of the work of the Namkum Research institute are research into new uses for shellac; work on improvement of the lac harvests; research into disease, parasites and other enemies, and means to eliminate them; and improvement and standardization of products.

Leading figures in the work of the Research institute have been Dr. R. W. Aldis, PH.D., D.I.C., who was physico-chemist for many years, Mr. P. M. Glover, M.B.E., B.SC., who was the entomologist of the institute for nearly twenty years, from 1929 to 1948, and the director who succeeded Mrs. Norris, Dr. H. K. Sen, D.SC., and Dr. P. K. Bose, D.SC., F.N.I., the present Director.

It is to be hoped, if only for the sake of the thousands of poor aboriginal cultivators to whom the money obtained from the sale of their stick-lac is a most useful addition to the family earnings, that the Lac Research institute will be successful in its efforts to stave off a disaster like that which overtook another great Bihar industry—indigo—through the growing use of synthetic substitutes.



## APPENDIX I

ADMINISTRATIVE DIVISIONS OF BIHAR PROVINCE, WITH POPULATION  
ACCORDING TO THE 1941 CENSUS.

Division	District and headquarters town	Area in Square-miles	Population	Number of people per square-mile
Patna (headquarters Patna)	Patna Gaya Shahabad (Arrah)	11,338 2,164 4,766 4,408	7,265,950 2,162,008 2,775,361 2,328,381	640 999 582 528
Tirhut (headquarters Muzaffarpur)	Saran (Chapra) Champaran (Motihari) Muzaffarpur Darbhanga	12,624 2,699 3,553 3,025 3,347	11,959,827 2,860,537 2,397,569 3,244,651 3,457,070	948 1,072 675 1,072 1,033

Bhagalpur (headquarters Bhagalpur)	†Monghyr ‡Bhagalpur Purnea Santal Parganas (Dumka)	18,701 3,975 4,248 4,998 5,480	9,598,025 2,564,544 2,408,879 2,390,105 2,234,497	514 643 543 478 408
Chota Nagpur (headquarters Ranchi)	Hazaribagh Ranchi Palamau (Daltonganj) Manbhum (Purulia) Singhbhum (Chaibasa)	27,112 7,016 7,159 4,901 4,131 3,995	7,516,349 1,751,339 1,675,413 912,734 2,032,146 1,144,717	299 250 234 186 492 293
* Bihar Province	...	...	69,775	36,340,151 521

†This includes North Monghyr.

‡Includes North Bhagalpur (now Saharsa district).

\*Excludes Saraikela and Kharsawan.



## APPENDIX 2

### TRAVELLING IN BIHAR

FACILITIES for travellers and tourists in Bihar are at present very meagre. The principal roads in the southern half of the province are for the most part excellent, and are a joy to the motorist. In North Bihar the roads are mainly unmetalled, or inadequately metalled, though efforts are being made to improve them.

There are very few large cities in the province; in fact there are only three with a population exceeding one hundred thousand—Patna (175,706), Jamshedpur (148,711) and Gaya (105,223). Bhagalpur is the next largest with 93,254. The hotel accommodation in the towns is very poor. At Patna, at the time of writing this, the only hotel which can be classed in anything like the 'superior' class is the 'Grand'. In the other towns, with the exception of those which will now be mentioned, high-class hotels are non-existent. In Ranchi there is a first-class hotel,—the B.N.R. hotel, and another good hotel recently opened is the 'Mount'. In Jamshedpur there is a good hotel owned by Messrs. Tatas. At Hazaribagh there is a small hotel at Singhani (Mrs. Foster's), three miles out of the town, and there is Miss Warde-Jones' boarding-house in the town. In the above towns and others there are of course lodging-houses of various classes.

In all towns of any size, and at intervals along the main roads, there are dak and inspection bungalows where the traveller can put up, provided there is room. The Public Works Inspection bungalows are superior to the dak bungalows; for accommodation in these inspection bungalows it is desirable to apply well in advance to the Executive Engineer of the district at the headquarters town. Very few of the bungalows have anything but the barest

furniture, and the traveller who intends to stop the night in any of them should bring his bedding with him. In most of the bungalows there is no cook or *khansama*, though hot water can usually be supplied.

At all district headquarter-towns there are circuit-houses which, as their name implies, are for the use of judges on circuit or other high officials. Permission is sometimes granted to non-official travellers to occupy circuit-houses for a night or so, but application has to be made in advance to the Collector of the district. The circuit-houses are comfortable and well-furnished and equipped, and nearly all of them have attached to them a servant who can do some cooking.

In the forest areas there are forest-bungalows, intended for the use of forest officials on their tours, but the ordinary traveller can usually obtain permission to stay in them by writing to the Divisional Forest officer of the forest division concerned. The divisions at present—in 1948—are: Ranchi, Hazaribagh, Giridih, Monghyr, Chaibasa, Dhalbhum (headquarters Jamshedpur), the Kolhan (headquarters Chaibasa), Palamau (headquarters Daltonganj), Porahat (headquarters Chaibasa), Manbhum (headquarters Purulia), Saranda (headquarters Chaibasa), and the Santal Parganas (headquarters Dumka). Other forest divisions are likely to be created before long, as more forests come under the management of the department. The forest-bungalows have furniture and a fair supply of crockery and cutlery. All the bungalows have *newar* (canvas-covered) bedsteads, and most of them mattresses.

There are now petrol pumps at all towns of any size, and at most of the small towns on main roads there are shops where petrol in tins can be obtained. Along the Grand Trunk Road in Bihar there is a pump at Chirkunda, where the road enters the province, and petrol in tins can be obtained at Rajganj, Isri (near Dumri), Bagodar, Barhi and Sherghati. There are other pumps at Aurangabad and Sasaram. On the roads west of Ranchi there is a pump at Lohardaga, and supplies in tins at Chandwa and Gumla. On the other main roads of the province there are either pumps or tins at intervals of at most fifty miles.



## APPENDIX 3

### FORESTS AND SHOOTING BLOCKS

A very large area of forest in Bihar is still under forest of a sort, but the area under any kind of scientific management is comparatively small. The bulk of the reserved forests, which are the only ones under the complete control of the forest department, are situated in the government estates. By far the greater part of the forest in the province belongs to the zemindars, and comparatively little of this has come under the management of the forest department, though the proprietors can, if they wish, apply to have their forests managed for them by that department.

Under an act recently passed, the Private Estates Forests Act, the government can take any forest under its control if it is in the public interest that this should be done. A measure of this kind, if passed 40 years ago, would have proved most valuable, but now the forests have been largely destroyed. The demand for timber and fuel was rapidly increasing before the second world war, and during the war it increased enormously—mainly owing to the presence of large numbers of troops (and at one time prisoners of war) in Chota Nagpur. Time alone will show whether or not the new act, and the measures now on the legislative anvil by which the government may step into the shoes of the landed proprietors, will be successful in preserving a substantial part of these forests and converting them into a valuable national asset.

The statement below gives the areas of forests in various categories, and their relation to the area of the province. The figures should be considered in their relation to the total area of forest (including scrub and bush jungle) in the province. Various estimates of this figure have been given,—it is not easy to obtain a definite figure from the settlement and other statistics which are available. But

we may assume that the area under forest of some sort or other is not less than 16,000 square miles. Almost the whole of this is either totally unsuitable for cultivation, or of little use for that purpose without elaborate irrigation schemes for some of the driest areas of the province.

Reserved forest	...	...	1640	square miles
Protected forests under the control of the forest department	...	665	"	"
Other protected forests	...	415	"	"
Other forests managed by agencies not under the forest dept.	...	91	"	"
Total		...	2811	" "

As explained above, these areas are likely to be greatly increased under the new government plans. But at present the percentage of the total area of the province (69,775 square miles) which is under management by the forest department is only about  $3\frac{1}{2}$  which is far below what is considered suitable in a balanced economy; while 80 per cent of the forests are under no proper management, most of them (with a few notable exception) being at present almost useless, except for a little firewood and some proper grazing.

The chief produce from the forests under the forest department consists of timber, mainly *sal*, and wood for fuel. Bamboos are also very important in some areas, large quantities being used for paper manufacture as well as for general use. *Sabai* grass, which has been mentioned in the chapter about the Paharias (Chapter XV) is also important, especially in the forests of Singhbhum. During the second world war there was an increasing demand for charcoal for producer-gas vehicles, a demand which still continues.

#### SHOOTING BLOCKS

THE best big-game shooting in Bihar province is undoubtedly in the reserved forests. These are divided into shooting blocks, and application to shoot in them should be made to the divisional forest officer of the division concerned (the headquarters of the various divisional forest



officers are given in appendix 2, in dealing with forest bungalows). The shooting blocks so far created are:—

SARANDA DIVISION,—Salai, Manharpur, Jaraikela, Tirilposi, Tholkabad, Kamdi.

KOLHAN DIVISION,—Chilimili, Saitba, Bamiaburu, Songajata, Lina, Patung, Posaita.

PORAHAT DIVISION,—Hessadih, Tebo, Sonua, Oranga, Kamrora, Girga.

HAZARIBAGH DIVISION,—Dhorakela and Khalaktambi, both in the Koderma reserved forests.

PALAMAU DIVISION,—Kerh, Lat, Mandu, Kumandi, Sarju, Barasand. (Rud is a sanctuary.)

So far no shooting blocks have been formed in the other seven forest divisions, most of which are recent creations, or consist mainly of forest which has only recently come under forest management.

The sportsman who intends to shoot in any of these blocks would do well to find out beforehand, from the D.F.O., whether or not a bungalow will be available to him, and what accommodation it provides; also what arrangements can be made for beaters, and for one or more experienced shikaris. The terms of the permit will indicate what animals, and how many, may be shot.

## APPENDIX 4

### LAND-TENURE SYSTEMS IN BIHAR

THE vast majority of the people of Bihar live on and by the land. They are landlords, great or small; *raiya*ts (tenant cultivators or small farmers); or agricultural labourers. The work of cultivation, the state of the land and crops, disputes about title to land, about rent, about succession to or shares in family holdings—these things play a very important part in their lives.

The whole system of land-tenure in Bihar and in other parts of India is at present in the melting-pot, and it is probable that the system described below will soon be a thing of the past, possibly before this book is in print. But it is the system which has prevailed in Bihar for over 150 years, and it has profoundly influenced the lives of the people and the agrarian history of the province, and this brief description may therefore be of use.

The system of land-tenure in Bihar is the *zemindari* system, under which the *zemindar* (landlord) collects rents from the *raiya*ts, his tenants, and pays the land-revenue due from him to the government. This is the system in its simplest form, but there are usually one or more intermediary tenure-holders between the cultivator and the superior landlord, each of whom retains a share of what he receives, as his profit. (The system under which the *raiya*t pays rent direct to the government, and which prevails in Madras, Bombay and other parts of India, is known as the *raiya*tware system.)

Until comparatively modern times nearly all *raiya*ts paid their rent in kind, but of recent years many have taken advantage of the process of commutation of such rents to cash rents, provided by the tenancy acts.

The *zemindari* system in its present form owes its origin to the Permanent Settlement of Bengal, an event which



took place in the year 1789, in the time of Lord Cornwallis. Under Moghul rule, and in the early days of British administration, the amount of revenue payable to the government by each land-holder was liable to annual revision. This acted as a deterrent to agricultural development or improvement, for any profits which might accrue from such improvements had to be paid in large part to the government. The idea of the Permanent Settlement was to give landlords a sense of security, and to encourage them to go ahead with plans for the extension and improvement of agriculture. The settlement was generally made with those persons who were found to be in the position of receivers of rent and payers of land revenue. In some cases they were men who happened to be farmers of the rents at the time, and not ancestral land-holders. The assessment of land revenue was by no means light. The land-holder had to pay to the government  $\frac{9}{10}$ ths of the income from his estate, and the severe sale-laws penalised any default by immediate eviction of the land-holder and the sale of his estate to the highest bidder.

In course of time the Permanent Settlement has of course been very profitable to those landed proprietors whose estates were undeveloped a century and a half ago, and in which large areas have since come under the plough. In some estates the land revenue now represents only a small fraction of the income from the estate, especially where the estate contains minerals, which are treated, in the permanently settled area, as the property of the proprietors of estates. (The proprietor now has to pay in other ways, for example, in agricultural income-tax and in local cess—a rate levied for maintenance of local roads, schools, hospitals and dispensaries.)

The Permanent Settlement Regulation dealt only with the landlords. It has been found necessary from time to time to pass legislation to protect the interests of the *raiyats*. In Bihar there are three main enactments,—the Chota Nagpur Tenancy Act, which applies to the division of Chota Nagpur; the Santal Parganas Regulations, particularly Reg. III of 1872, which contains the special laws for that district; and the Bihar Tenancy Act (based on the

Bengal Tenancy Act), which applies to the rest of the province.

Among the objects of the tenancy laws was the prevention of enhancement of rent except through the courts, and of wrongful eviction of *raiya*s. The Santal Parganas and Chota Nagpur laws go much farther than the Bihar Act in the attempt to protect the *raiya*, especially the aboriginal, from loss of his land to money-lenders and others. But in the Bihar Act also it was found necessary a few years ago to introduce provisions to help aboriginals and other backward peoples who live in parts of Monghyr, Bhagalpur, Purnea and Champaran districts to hold their own against more astute neighbours and money-lenders.

In various parts of Bihar there are estates which have come into the direct possession of the government in various ways. In such estates (called *khasmahals*) the *raiya* usually either pays his rent direct to the government or through a headman or other intermediary. The largest *khasmahals* in the province are the Damin-i-koh in the Santal Parganas and the Kolhan and Porahat in Singhbhum—all predominantly aboriginal tracts. Other estates over which the government exercises a measure of direct control are those which are under the Court of Wards, owing to the minority of the proprietor, or insanity or other disability. In some cases the proprietor has voluntarily entrusted the management of his estate to the Court of Wards, on the ground that he feels unable to manage the property himself. In Chota Nagpur there is a special act aimed at protecting old and respected landed families from losing their estates through indebtedness (the Chota Nagpur Encumbered Estates Act), and some estates have been taken over by the Court of Wards and Encumbered Estates under this Act. The largest estates at present under the Court of Wards are the Bettiah estate, to which reference has been made in the body of this book, and the Hathwa estate in Saran district.

Reference has been made in several places in this book to the district Settlements. The survey and settlement of a district is an operation which is supposed to take place about every fifteen years, but in practice is carried out at



longer intervals (at the time of writing this the record of the Muzaffarpur settlement is over fifty years old). The object of the survey and settlement is to prepare a complete record rights in land. The name of the landlord and tenant of every field is recorded, also the amount of rent payable, the crop grown, and many other particulars. At the same time a large scale-map is made showing separately every field, as well as roads, rivers, village sites, forests, etc. The modern method is to prepare the map from photographs taken from the air. In some parts of India the record so prepared is kept up-to-date by an experienced staff which records all changes in the map and in the names of tenants, and any changes in the area of holdings. The main reason why this has not hitherto been possible in Bihar is the absence of any system of village officials who could do the work.

## A NOTE ON THE BIBLIOGRAPHY OF BIHAR

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Books containing a general description of the province or a part of it are not numerous, if we exclude the district Gazetteers, which are mines of information, though many of them are now out of date. There are of course plenty of books of travel which mention Bihar *en passant*, because the traveller from Bengal to the North had to pass through Bihar. The following books deal with the province or parts of it:

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<sup>1</sup> Cunningham and Beglar were both great archaeologists and great-hearted men, but they disagreed at some length and with some acrimony over the identification of a certain cave. In his book mentioned above Beglar made the following touching remark, after mentioning some new theories about other archaeological matters which the General had confided to him, "how can I adequately show my worthiness of the noble confidence thus placed in an adversary but by unhesitatingly acknowledging my error?"

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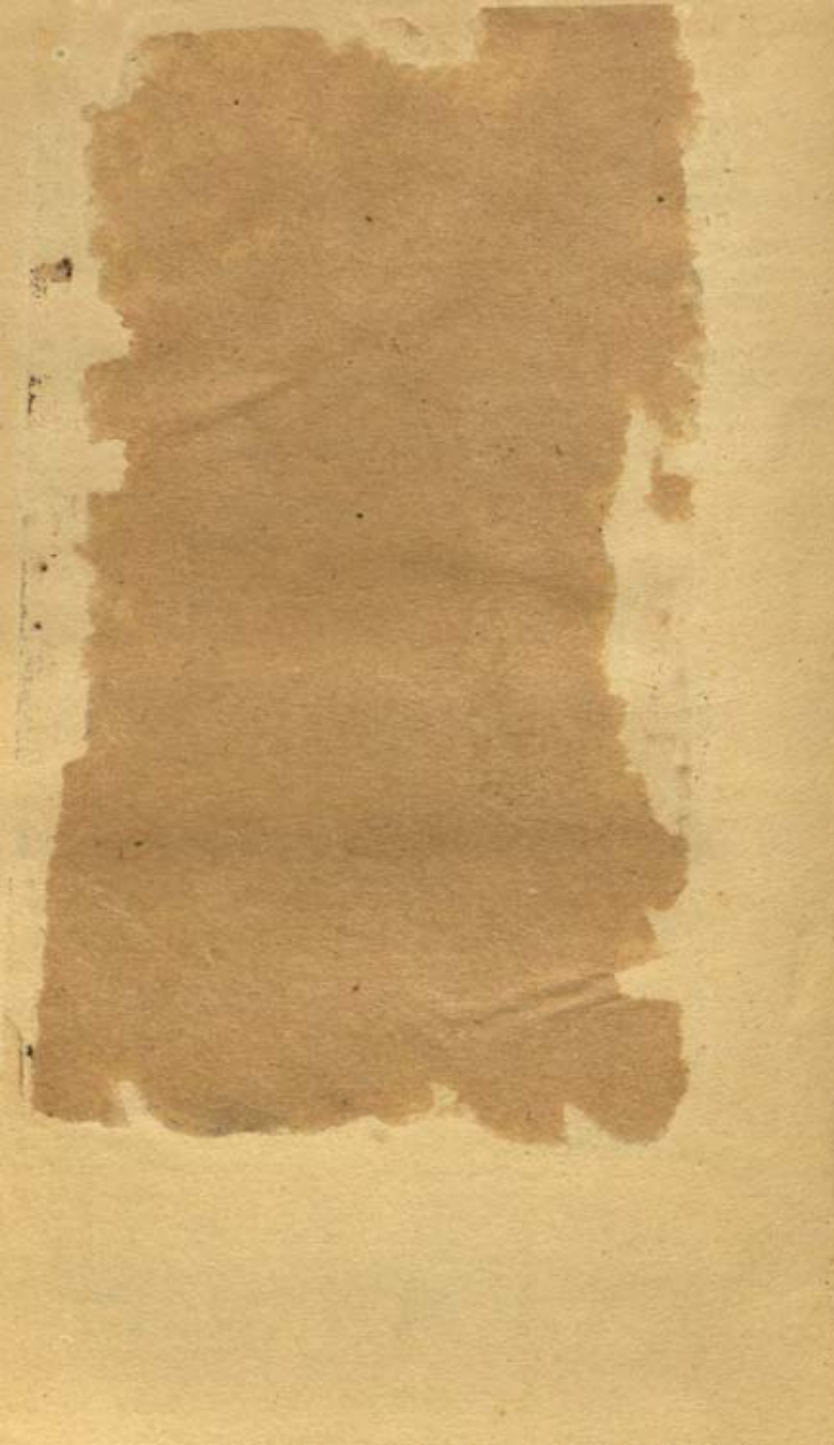


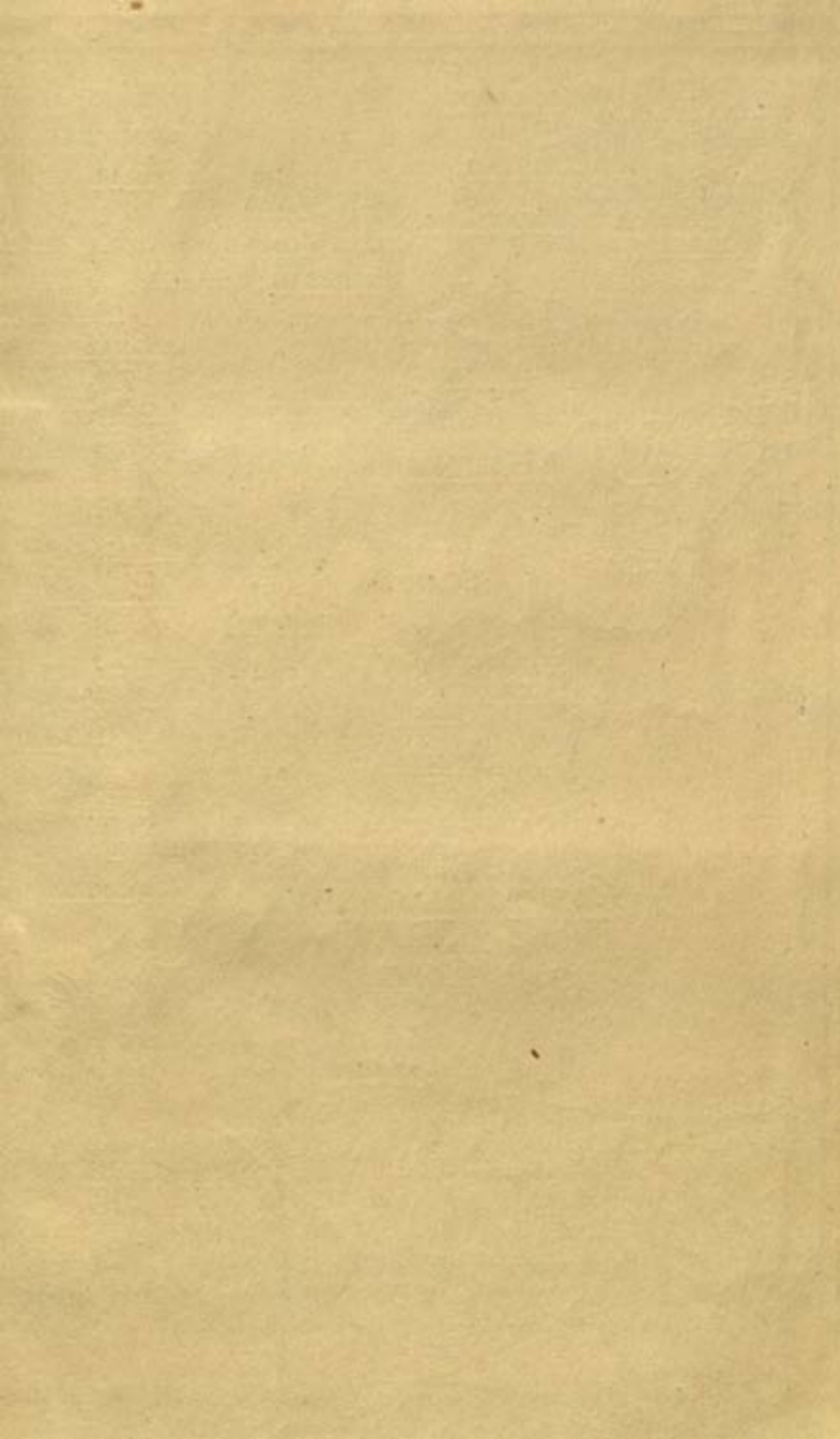
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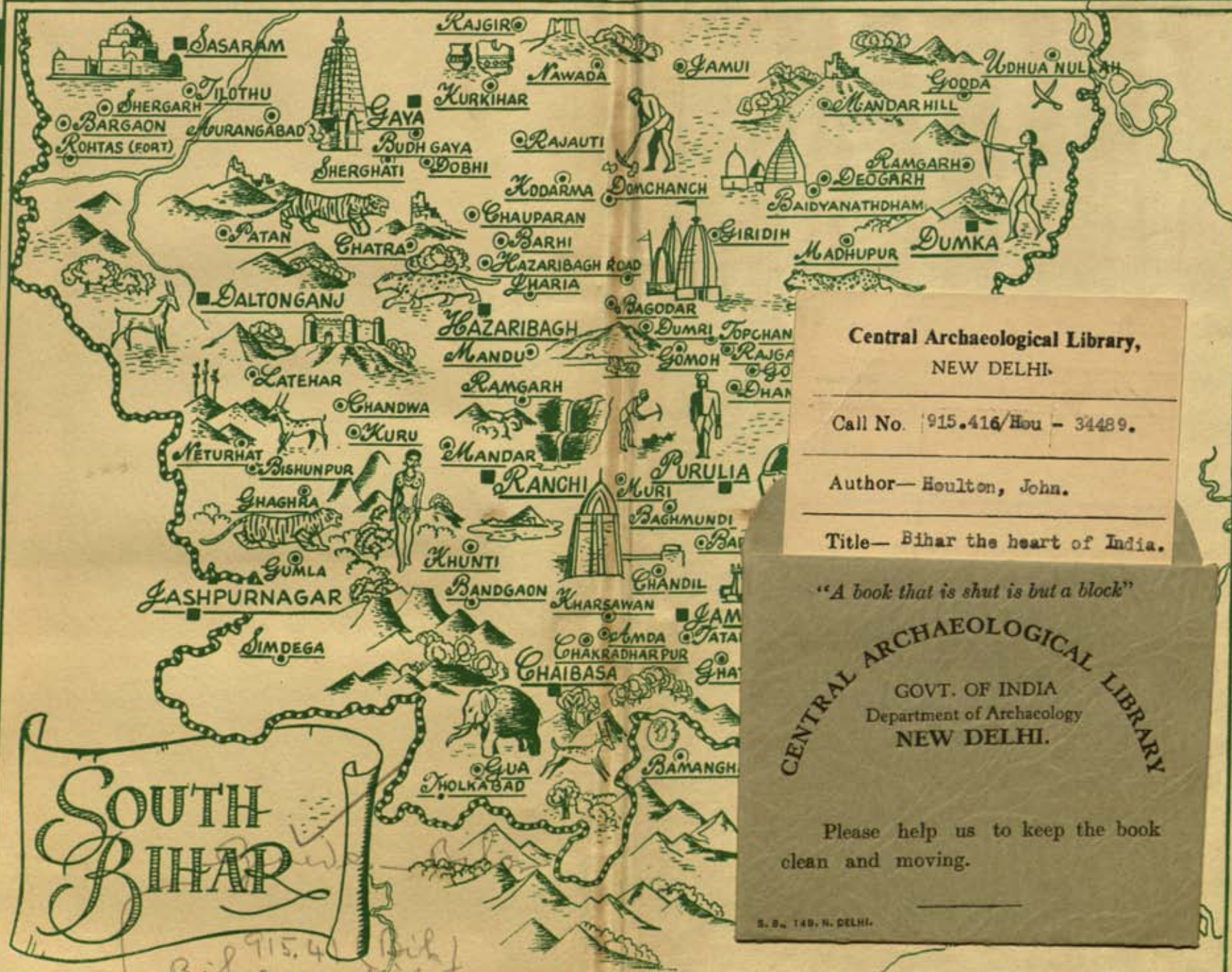












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